



OREGON PUBLIC HEALTH DIVISION
Health Promotion & Chronic Disease Prevention Section

Kate Brown, Governor

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TO: The Honorable Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair
Senate Committee on Rules

FROM: Holly Heiberg
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SUBJECT: HB 3253A, Commission for the Blind Vending Operations

Chair Burdick and members of the committee, I am Holly Heiberg, the Legislative Coordinator for the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority. I am here today to present information related to promoting and supporting healthy food and beverage options offered at cafeterias and vending machines in Oregon government agencies.

The Commission for the Blind and the Public Health Division have been working together to assure healthy food and beverage options are available in state buildings. Currently, a pilot project is underway in the Barbara Roberts Human Services Building (HSB) in Salem where our staff are working with the business owner of the café to offer healthier food and beverage options.

Since January, the HSB café has piloted several healthier options. Both sales data and reports from building tenants tell us that the new and healthier items are indeed selling. This kind of partnership is a win-win: Department of Human Services and Oregon Health Authority employees and visitors have access to healthier food and beverage options at work and vending operators are successful. An evaluation of this pilot will be available this summer. What has been learned thus far is being applied to other state agency facilities.

In support of employee wellness and to address the leading cost drivers of health care, Governor Brown signed Worksite Wellness Executive Order 17-01. This Executive Order establishes the infrastructure necessary for state agencies to create wellness plans with measureable outcomes. These plans will be designed to bend the cost curve for state government health care costs by implementing changes to work environments where employees can be healthy, empowered and engaged in delivering effective state services.

In its amended form, House Bill 3253A expands the scope of the Commission for the Blind to determine vending in facilities operated not only by the State, but also by county, city and other political subdivisions. This gives the Commission the opportunity to have even greater influence on the food environments in government buildings where thousands of Oregonians work every day.

The Public Health Division is committed to working with the Commission for the Blind to ensure that vending facilities are successful in implementing the changes outlined in this bill. Specifically, we are able to provide subject matter expertise to define healthy vending items using existing evidence-based standards, such as the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) *Health and Sustainability Guidelines for Federal Concessions and Vending Operations*. Defining “healthy vending items” is a critical role for public health professionals to play: a key early learning from the HSB café pilot project has been that people define the term “healthy vending items” in widely divergent ways. The HSB pilot has shown that “healthy vending items” must be benchmarked against standards rooted in scientifically sound nutrition principles.

Collaborations to increase access to healthy food and beverage options in government facilities is one key strategy to improve nutrition. Poor nutrition is a driver of obesity, and obesity leads to cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke. This is a public health crisis, second only to tobacco use as a leading cause of preventable death and disease. Obesity costs human lives and costs Oregonians about \$1.6 billion in medical expenses each year.ⁱ

We know from surveys of people living in Oregon that 80 percent of adults are trying to maintain or lose weight.ⁱⁱ This is something we all can relate to. Creating environments where healthy foods and beverages are available is an effective way to help state employees, visitors and clients have the opportunity to make choices that support their health. The Public Health Division looks forward to working to implement Governor Brown’s Executive Order on state agency wellness, and invites the Commission for the Blind to join with us to support healthier food environments in state agencies.

The Public Health Division appreciates this committee addressing healthy vending items in state buildings. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

ⁱ "Obesity-related chronic diseases cost Oregonians about \$1.6 billion in medical expenses each year, with \$339 million of that paid by Medicare and \$333 million paid by Medicaid." Trogon, E, Finkelstein E, Feagan C, Cohen, J. State- and payer- specific estimates of annual medical expenditures attributable to obesity. *Obesity*. 2012;20:214-220.

ⁱⁱ 2013 Oregon Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). Unpublished data.