



Native American Youth and Family Center

5135 NE Columbia Blvd, Portland, OR 97218 | p 503.288.8177 | f 503.288.1260 | nayapdx.org

April 10, 2019

To: Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Findley, Vice Chair Marsh, Members of the House Committee on Revenue

RE: House Bill 2270 – Support

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Findley, Vice Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee. For the record, my name is William Miller, I am a decendent of the *Cherokee and Blackfeet* people, and I serve as the Health Equity Program Coordinator at NAYA, the Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland, Oregon. NAYA's wraparound programs directly serve over 2,000 individual Native American youth, adults, and Elders every year and positively impacts more than 10,000 lives throughout Portland's growing urban Native community.

Our Native American communities and tribes throughout the United States uphold and value the importance of tobacco as traditional medicine used to promote mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being. When our people use it in a sacred manner, it's not to be used or correlated with addiction or other detrimental health implications. Though, when it comes to our youth, adults, and Elders consuming cigarettes in an unhealthy and non-ceremonial manner – we need to implement upstream public health approaches to ensure the focus is on prevention and intervention – the tobacco tax does just that. This legislation will provide \$346 million dollars per biennia for the Oregon Health Plan, which provides health care for nearly one million of Oregon's most vulnerable populations, as well as bring meaningful investments into communities and culturally specific programs to address prevention and cessation of tobacco and nicotine products not used in a cerimonial way.

According to a report issued by the Oregon Health Authority in 2018, *Oregon Tobacco Facts* stated that 41.4% of American Indian/Alaska Natives on the Oregon Helath plan consume tobacco outside of ceremonial purposes in an unhealthy manner. It's clear that the highest consumers of tobacco related products in the state identify as American Indian/Alaska Native – we must



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implement an upstream public health approaches aimed at curbing this growing issue in an increasingly growing racial demographic. Raising the price of tobacco and nicotine products is the single most effective tool to reduce addictive proclivities. A 10% increase in price will lead to a 4% reduction among adult consumption and a 7% reduction in youth consumption. E-cigarette companies target youth with highly addictive chemical properties masked by a flavored nicotine-filled product. This product entices youth to experiment, leading to higher rates of youth exposure and addiction to the chemical-based nicotine and social conformity of “fitting in.”. Since 2017 the number of middle schoolers who say they have tried an e-cigarette has increased by 48%; effectively creating a whole new target market and generation of addicted tobacco users.

Our Native community members are wisdom carriers, life bearers, aunties, uncles, brothers, sisters, mothers, and fathers. We have to preserve and protect our communities from the harmful impacts of tobacco use. Implementing the tobacco tax would guide our communities to reduced consumption, in turn it will provide healing, greater health outcomes, and life-long positive health impacts for generations to come.

On behalf of the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA) we urge the passage of HB 2270, for continued health, healing, and lifelong longevity of our people and our communities.

Thank you,

William Miller
Government Affairs
Native American Youth and Family Center
WilliamM@nayapdx.org
O: (503) 288-8177 ext 306
C: (971) 288-7783



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