

OREGON COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

April 10th, 2019
House Committee on Revenue
CLHO Supports HB 2270

Chair Nathanson and Members of the House Revenue Committee:

My name is Morgan Cowling and I am the Executive Director for the Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials (CLHO). I work with and on behalf of the 33 local public health authorities in Oregon who work every day to prevent the spread of disease, promote health and protect Oregonians in their communities. CLHO supports HB 2270, which will save lives and money in Oregon by increasing the price of tobacco products, and e-cigarettes.

According to the 2014 report, The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress, released by the Surgeon General, raising the price of cigarettes is "one of the most effective tobacco control interventions."¹ In 2018, Oregon's current cigarette tax ranks 31st in the country at \$1.33 per pack.² E-cigarettes are currently not taxed at all in Oregon despite the strong evidence that youth who use e-cigarettes are twice as likely to try cigarettes. E-cigarettes are a delivery system for nicotine which is a highly addictive drug and they often contain other chemicals which can cause cancer and birth defects.

CLHO is supportive of the \$2 increase in cigarette tax and taxing e-cigarettes at 65% of wholesale price, like Other Tobacco Products (OTP). Here are three important reasons we need to tax e-cigarettes like other nicotine and tobacco products.

1. Oregon and the Federal Government currently tax every other non-FDA approved nicotine product. The lack of state or federal taxation is a policy choice and Oregon is currently choosing to make these products significantly less expensive than other tobacco and nicotine products.
2. Youth use of e-cigarette products has grown significantly as these products grow in popularity. Youth use in Oregon was reported at 13 percent in 2017, which is on the rise, up from 1.8 percent just six years earlier, in 2011.

Former CDC- Director Tom Friedan has stated, "We want parents to know that nicotine is dangerous for kids at any age, whether it's an e-cigarette, hookah, cigarette or cigar." He went on to say that **"Adolescence is a critical time for brain development. Nicotine exposure at a young age may cause lasting harm to brain development, promote addiction, and lead to sustained tobacco use."**

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), The Health Consequences of Smoking: 50 Years of Progress. A Report of the Surgeon General, Atlanta, GA: HHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014, <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/50-years-ofprogress/index.html>.

² Truth Initiative. Tobacco Use in Oregon, 2018. <https://truthinitiative.org/tobacco-use-oregon>



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3. The Food and Drug Administration began to take steps to regulate e-cigarettes like tobacco products in a “deeming” rule promulgated in 2016.³ In the release of the rule they stipulated, “The FDA believes that this new technology has both potential benefits and risks. If certain products, such as e-cigarettes, have reduced toxicity compared to conventional cigarettes; encourage current smokers to switch completely; and/or are not widely used by youth, they may have the potential to reduce disease and death. But if any product prompts young people to become addicted to nicotine, reduces a person’s interest in quitting cigarettes, and/or leads to long-term usage with other tobacco products, the public health impact could be negative.”

Until we know with certainty that these products have reduced toxicity, get people off tobacco completely and do not encourage a new generation of nicotine addiction we must treat them like other tobacco products and tax them at a level that at the very least discourages youth use.

Oregon’s local public health authorities work with local communities to implement evidence-based strategies to prevent deaths and diseases from tobacco and nicotine. Since 1996, these strategies have decreased adult smoking rates by 28 percent.⁴ Investing in these prevention programs by increasing nicotine and tobacco taxes and creating a new e-cigarette tax will continue to save lives both through raising revenue for these effective tobacco and nicotine prevention programs as well as discouraging the purchasing of these products through a higher price tag.

Respectfully submitted,

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Executive Director

³ <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2016/05/10/2016-10685/deeming-tobacco-products-to-be-subject-to-the-federal-food-drug-and-cosmetic-act-as-amended-by-the>

⁴ Oregon Health Authority. 2018 Tobacco Facts. <https://apps.state.or.us/Forms/Served/le9139.pdf>



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