

OREGON COALITION OF LOCAL HEALTH OFFICIALS

June 17, 2019
Joint Tax Expenditure Committee
CLHO Supports HB 2270 A

Co-Chairs Senator Hass & Representative Nathanson and Members of the Joint Tax Expenditure Committee:

The Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials represents the 33 local public health authorities in Oregon who protect health and prevent the spread of disease. The Coalition of Local Health Officials supports a \$2 increase in cigarette tax and taxing e-cigarettes at 65% of the wholesale price in order to prevent diseases and premature death while also saving money.

Tobacco use remains the number one contributor to preventable death in Oregon, but we have an opportunity to change that. According to a 2014 report released by the Surgeon General, raising the price of cigarettes is "one of the most effective tobacco control interventions."¹ Oregon's current cigarette tax is remarkably low, ranking 31st in the country at \$1.33 per pack.² We need a \$2 increase in cigarette taxes because, in Oregon, tobacco use kills nearly 8,000 people each year and costs \$2.5 billion a year in medical expenses, lost productivity, and early death. Using tobacco puts people at risk of developing chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, asthma, and cancer. Nearly 28 percent of cancer deaths in Oregon are caused by smoking.

Further, we must begin taxing e-cigarettes like we do tobacco products. E-cigarettes are a delivery system for nicotine, a highly addictive drug, and they often contain other chemicals which can cause cancer and birth defects. Oregon is currently choosing to make these products significantly less expensive by not taxing them at all despite the strong evidence that e-cigarettes can be a gateway to traditional cigarettes, particularly with youth. A national study found teens who tried using e-cigarettes were four times more likely to go on to try smoking cigarettes and three times more likely to be current cigarette smokers.³

The Oregon Coalition of Local Health Officials has long had concerns with preemption. We have concerns with the -15A amendment and urge the committee not to adopt the amendment. Please pass the HB 2270A to the House and Senate Floors.

Electronically submitted.

Morgan D. Cowling, Executive Director

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-of-progress/index.html>.

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

³ Kaitlyn Berry et al. Association of Electronic Cigarette Use With Subsequent Initiation of Tobacco Cigarettes in US Youths. 2019. <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2723425>



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