



February 6, 2020
Senate Committee on Health Care
Testimony in Support of SB 1577

Chair Monnes Anderson, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Senate Committee on Health Care:

My name is Karen Ard and I am the Tobacco Prevention Education and Program Coordinator for Deschutes County Health Services. I am here testifying on behalf of Deschutes County in support of SB 1577.

We strongly recommend support for this bill, as flavors continue to be a key component in making inhalant delivery systems attractive to youth. Among Oregon high school students who use inhalant delivery systems exclusively, nearly 90% use flavored products. In Deschutes County, almost 40% of our 11th graders have reported having used a flavored tobacco or vaping product.

The use of inhalant delivery systems pose a significant – and avoidable – health risk to young people. The use of these products among youth is particularly concerning as their brains are still developing, which can lead to long-term harm, as well as an increased risk for lifelong addiction to nicotine or other substances. At such a critical stage for development, harm to concentration, learning and impulse control are also major concerns for the health of our youth. There is strong evidence that inhalant delivery systems lead to youth nicotine addiction and increases the risk that youth will start using combustible tobacco such as conventional cigarettes.

We are also concerned about the immediate and devastating effects these products are having on respiratory health, with the recent cases of e-cigarette and vaping product use associated lung injury. In addition to these severe cases, use of inhalant delivery systems increases the severity of asthma symptoms, chronic bronchitis, and other respiratory issues, including cough and wheezing among adolescents.

Prohibiting the sale of flavored inhalant delivery systems is an effective way to reduce the number of youth that will eventually become addicted to nicotine, and other potentially lifelong health consequences. On behalf of Deschutes County, we urge the committee to support SB 1577 and any additional amendments that would support comprehensive tobacco prevention strategies to help protect the health of our youth.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Karen Ard