

I am writing in support of SB587 as an advocate for the youth of Oregon. It makes no sense to have retail licensing requirements for products that do not harm when used as directed, as opposed to tobacco, that kills when used as intended. Based on years of data that indicates the majority of tobacco users started using those products before the age of 20, it also makes sense for Oregonians to put measures in place that can reduce youth access at the retail level.

As a parent I have been frustrated by the lack of inspections and oversight of tobacco sales to minors by the state and FDA. The few times the FDA did make inspections, when violations were found the only sanction was sending a letter to the retailer asking them to correct the problem. The Oregon Tobacco Retail Enforcement Inspection Results for 2018-19 indicate that one in six retailers sold illegally to underage youth. Since these inspections did not cover 100% of tobacco retailers in the state, this amount may be grossly understated.

Tobacco retail licensing would also give the state and local public health a clearer picture of the tobacco retail field in Oregon. Currently, the only way to determine accurate figures for tobacco retailers is to inspect every facility open to the public in person. It was shocking to me to find cigars for sale on the counter of a fly fishing establishment when I stopped to buy a kayaking permit on my way to the lake with my family. Did they know it was illegal to have them where children could access them? I doubt it. Tobacco retail licensing would help to educate retailers on Oregon law and how to keep youth safer.

Oregon is only one of seven states that does not have a tobacco retail license. Since tobacco retail licensing is proven to reduce sales to minors this bill just makes sense. Please pass SB 587 for the youth in Oregon.