



Health Department

February 4, 2022

House Committee on Health Care
900 Court St. NE - Remote D
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 4101 - Extending smoke-free areas

Chair Prusak and members of the House Committee on Health Care, I am Jessica Guernsey, Public Health Director for the Multnomah County Health Department. I am writing today in support of HB 4101, which would expand protections from secondhand smoke.

Oregon has long been a leader in protecting health, having passed an Indoor Clean Air Act a decade ago that was among the strongest in the nation and that later was strengthened to include e-cigarettes and vaping products. Still, Oregon has fallen behind in protecting those who work, play and study. Our existing law prohibiting smoking 10 feet from public buildings is no longer sufficient. Most of our neighboring states have adopted 20 and 25 foot non-smoking rules. A smoke-free perimeter around public buildings protects those working in the service industry, elderly people and those with disabilities who rely on smoke-free sidewalks, and those lower income people who find themselves at bus stops or other locations just outside buildings. Such laws also protect apartment dwellers who live in congregate housing often relying on fresh air just outside the building.

Tobacco use remains the #1 cause of death and disability. Every step we take to reduce the direct impact of tobacco products is key to saving lives. This means reducing the more than 8,000 Oregonians who die every year due to tobacco use.¹ It is also important to reduce visual tobacco use, in order to denormalize tobacco use so young people never start using. Reducing exposure to secondhand smoke, reducing cues to smoke to people who are trying to quit, and reducing visibility of smoking to young eyes, are all benefits of this policy.

Nearly 90% of Multnomah County residents support the Indoor Clean Air Act.² Recent public opinion research found that 68% of the nation support restrictions on smoking at public building entrances/doorways.³ In Oregon, exposure to secondhand smoke indoors is most closely associated with low income people, those living in rural areas, those who are unemployed, and those who rent versus own.¹ These trends are likely amplified when applied to people working in outdoor occupations and those who find themselves leaving and entering buildings using public pathways such as sidewalks,

building entryways, and parking lots.

Although the majority of workplaces are now smokefree indoors, more than one in ten Oregonians are exposed to secondhand smoke (SHS) at work.¹ Ten feet is not far from a door or window for smoke, therefore even outdoor patios and restaurant seats may still expose workers to SHS. Extending the buffer to 25 feet may reduce exposure for employees both outside and inside workplaces. Research has found that smoking outdoors adjacent to indoor public areas increases SHS in both places.⁴

We are very sensitive to the possibility that smoke-free policies could increase targeting of low income folks, folks experiencing mental health challenges, or people of color. The beauty of this bill and the existing Indoor Clean Air Act is that no enforcement occurs upon individuals who use tobacco products. Public education about this non-smoking rule occurs mainly through signage posted at public buildings. When complaints about smoking are received, those are directed to business owners with the intention to ensure signage is posted and that businesses are not setting up smoking posts within the non-allowed areas. One recommendation from Multnomah County is to ensure that all manner of education about this new law occurs- including outreach to businesses, communities experiencing homelessness, and the behavioral health community.

Multnomah County Public Health looks forward to building on our current relationships with local businesses. In our Tobacco Control and Prevention Program, we provide free decals indicating smoking is not allowed within 10 feet of buildings to businesses as well as respond to requests for technical assistance for specific properties. We also encourage Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to provide free decals upon passage of this law. These signs must be available in multiple languages and be free to all businesses who wish to post them. We look forward to partnering with OHA and with our local business community to conduct educational outreach and ensure we are supporting clean air in public places for all people who live, work, and relax there.

¹ Oregon Health Authority. Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section. Tobacco Facts, 2020

² Oregon Health Authority. Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Section. Panel Survey, 2017. Unpublished data.

³ Truth Initiative. The Unprotected States, 2018.

<https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/smoking-region/measuring-support-tobacco-control-policies-states-deadly-smoking>

⁴ Sureda, X, et al. Secondhand tobacco smoke exposure in open and semi-open settings: a systematic review. *Environmental Health Perspectives*. 2013. 121(7): 766-773).