

Rep. Lisa Reynolds, HD 34
Testimony in Support of HB 2128
House Committee on Judiciary
2/14/23

Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Wallan and Anderson, and my fellow committee members, thank you for your time this morning.

For the record, my name is Lisa Reynolds and I serve as state rep for House District 34. As many of you know, and as I often talk about, in my day job I work as a pediatrician serving children in Washington County.

My work both in the legislature and in my clinic drive my support for this important bill. I treat many kids who are addicted to nicotine, and I counsel many parents who smoke regularly. Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances available to the public, and young people are especially susceptible to developing an addiction to nicotine. In fact, nearly 9 out of 10 adults who smoke cigarettes daily first try smoking by age 18, and 99% first try smoking by age 26. This is an addiction that gets its claws into our young people early in life – and doesn't let go.

Nicotine addiction causes mental and physical health issues, including anxiety, depression, and the health consequences of long term inhalation of toxins: tragic heart and lung conditions which curtail and shorten life. In addition to the profound toll that nicotine addiction takes on the lives of those affected, it also places a significant financial burden on Oregon taxpayers. The state must pay for the public health fallout of nicotine addiction while the tobacco companies who cause it are raking in profits.

There have been master settlements that acknowledge the actual monetary cost of tobacco related morbidity and mortality and the public health expenses of tobacco use. Tobacco has been made to contribute to these settlements in an attempt to offset the costs of

We have an obligation to fix statues that are not working and are not adequately serving Oregon taxpayers. If we do not fix this statute, tobacco companies will continue making a profit at the expense of our kids' health, while also making a profit off the very money they are supposed to have set aside to treat this public

health crisis. We have an opportunity to simplify our process, remove red tape, and ensure positive public health outcomes by removing the escrow account process and making tobacco manufacturers pay their dues directly to OHA. This will not increase the amount they pay, but it will ensure that the money delivers on its intended cause. It makes good financial sense *and* good public health sense.

However, if we do *not* fix this statute, tobacco companies can use the savings they'll gain to lower prices of their products. Inexpensive products are often most appealing to young people, perpetuating and worsening the cycle of young people getting addicted and becoming lifelong customers of big tobacco. If cigarette smoking continues at the current rate among youth in this country, 5.6 million of today's Americans younger than 18 will die early from a smoking-related illness. That means about **1 in every 13 American youth who are alive today will die early** as a result of this tragic and preventable disease. We have the chance to stop this through HB 2128. I urge your support.