

HB 3090 Testimony Letter

March 19th, 2023

Dear Chair Nosse, Vice-Chairs Nelson and Goodwein, and members of the House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care:

I'm writing in support of HB 3090, the Preventing Nicotine Addiction bill, which will protect our kids and our communities by ending the sale of all flavored tobacco products in Oregon.

I am a lifetime Oregonian and parent of two, residing in Portland.

I support this bill for several reasons. First, I believe that place impacts health; this means the community we live in and all of its characteristics (saturation of stores that sell tobacco, access to healthy food, etc.) have a huge impact on our health. Lower income neighborhoods, which often have higher amounts of people who are Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, etc. tend to have higher rates of tobacco use and also more tobacco-related health disparities. I believe it is not a coincidence that these neighborhoods also tend to have much higher density of stores and markets that sell tobacco, particularly flavored tobacco products that are alluring to kids.

Secondly, I am a parent and support policies that protect my kids. There is a large body of evidence that shows that nicotine causes damage to adolescent mental health and negatively impacts their ability to learn. While I believe that education and prevention about these products needs to start early and happen both at home and at school, I know that consistent marketing, peer pressure, and frequent exposure/easy access to these products can lead to poor decisions. Restricting the sale of these products across the state is a much more effective strategy.

Third, I have lost loved ones to tobacco-related diseases and have a sibling who began using tobacco at a very young age because of all of the reasons mentioned above. What products did he start with? Menthol cigarettes, because they tasted good and felt tingly when inhaled. This loved one later dealt with opioid use disorder, which is very common for youth who use nicotine at an early age.

Our kids are being targeted by Big Tobacco. Our kids are using flavored tobacco. While product names like Cotton Candy and Tutti Fruitti sound harmless, they are very dangerous. Consider the facts

- More than 3 million middle and high school students use tobacco and e-cigarettes.
- 85% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products.
- Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon, killing over 8,000 Oregonians a year.

Nicotine is highly addictive and can harm adolescent brain development. Taking action now will help protect our kids, prevent serious health impacts and avoid a lifetime of addiction.

Why is this bill necessary, when retailers are already prohibited from selling flavored tobacco to young people under age 21? Because it's not working.

- The Oregon Health Authority recently reported that 25% of Oregon businesses sold tobacco to underage buyers.

Passage of HB 3090, the Preventing Nicotine Addiction Act, will go a long way to protect youth across Oregon from falling into the trap of nicotine addiction and tobacco and e-cigarette use, as well as the host of serious health consequences associated with their use.

Sincerely,
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