

March 20th, 2023

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

I am writing in support of HB 3090, the bill prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products. We must do our part to protect the health of our youth and communities throughout all of Oregon.

My name is Isaac Gomez. I am a first generation Mexican immigrant that has called Oregon home for thirteen years. I have earned a Bachelor's of Science in Biology with Minors in Chemistry and Molecular Biology. I currently work in the area of public health at *Latino Network*. However, I come to you as a concerned son and future father. I urge you to pass a complete and total ban on flavored nicotine and tobacco products, with no exemptions or exceptions.

Throughout my life, I have drawn inspiration from my father. My father braved the journey to a new country to rescue his family from multigenerational violence and conflicts. We found refuge in Oregon back in the late 90's. Despite rescuing his family, my father fell victim to an insidious enemy: tobacco.

In Mexican culture, one is taught from a young age that hard work prevails all and any challenge. When I was young, I believed that my father was the embodiment of that teaching. I witnessed my father working long and relentless hours doing physical labor so that his children could have a future beyond one attainable in his own lifetime. My father was my Superman but his kryptonite was tobacco. I often wondered how someone so strong-willed could not escape the clutches of his nicotine addiction. My father has tried for years to overcome his addiction to nicotine. I remember sitting down and asking him why he could not quit. He turned to me and replied, "If I don't smoke, it's as if I don't have the strength to breathe."

I have seen him countless times try to quit. Sometimes going several months without a single puff of his cigarette. Yet, my father would go through a stressful event and he would relapse, seeking temporary relief from stress through a single cigarette. That one cigarette would be enough to reignite that vicious cycle of dependence on nicotine.

Thankfully, I never caught onto the allure of cigarettes or other tobacco products. The harsh smell exhaled by my father, accompanied by his tobacco-related health issues, have been enough to deter me from trying them.

I want my children to walk the same path as my father, with strength and determination. I urge you to keep that path clear of ensnarement from tobacco companies through their use of flavored tobacco products. According to the FDA, approximately 1,500 children smoke their very first tobacco product each day. The vast majority of them started with flavored tobacco.

I want my children and the children of Oregon to inherit my father's dedication to hard work, not his curse.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to share my family's journey with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Isaac Gomez", with a stylized, overlapping flourish at the end.

Isaac Gomez