

Submitter: Sylvia Miranda

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Behavioral Health and Health Care

Measure: HB3090

For the record, my name is Sylvia Miranda, and I am the Executive Director of the National Latino Officers Association. Since 1996 the National Latino Officers Association has been at the forefront of advocating against issues that adversely affect our communities. I am testifying today in opposition to HB 3090 which would ban the sale of flavored nicotine and tobacco products. Let it be clear that WE DO NOT ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT, OR PROMOTE CIGARETTE SMOKING. We are advocating on behalf of the unintended consequences that our communities will suffer if the ban were to pass. Our organization believes that such drastic action will cause irreparable harm to the same people it is intended to protect. This ban will expose consumers to unnecessary risks by forcing them to purchase their flavored tobacco products in an illicit and unregulated underground market. There is data from other states and municipalities where similar flavor bans have been imposed that confirm prohibition creates new problems while failing to address the issue of tobacco addiction. One of the problems our organization is concerned with relates to law enforcement.

If the goal of the state of Oregon is to achieve genuine public health benefits as they relate to tobacco use, then prohibition is not the way to go. The ban will not stop the production or purchase of flavored nicotine and tobacco products, but it will certainly create an underground market for illegal and unregulated products. The ban will open a huge market for smugglers to offer members of our communities yet another illicit and unregulated product along with all the other illegal substances plaguing our neighborhoods daily. The ban will make flavored tobacco products more valuable and an attractive business for organized crime and gangs to undertake. NLOA firmly believes that the best way to address tobacco use in our community is through a medical approach; we should not criminalize an addiction.

Legal and regulated businesses play a crucial role to ensure that consumers have access to well-made products and that adult products are kept out of the hands of young people. A ban will push these products into an underground market where there is no oversight and no motivation to comply with regulations. The purchase and consumption of flavored tobacco products will be unnecessarily riskier. Flavored tobacco consumers need their legislators to adopt a public health solution to assist them with their addiction which can be in the form of expanding anti-smoking education and prevention and cessation programs. This approach will keep communities safer and healthier far more effectively than a prohibitive policy.