

February 9, 2015

Chair Greenlick, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 2546.

As a family doctor with board certification in preventive medicine and public health, I have spent nearly 10 years working in primary care and public health in the Portland metro area.

I currently serve as the Deputy Health Officer in Multnomah County where our Board of Health recognizes that unregulated electronic cigarettes, vape pens, and inhalant delivery systems represent an urgent public health issue. The Board is considering a variety of local actions to protect our youth.

Let me begin by emphasizing that nicotine is not just the highly addictive substance in tobacco. It has its own health effects including accelerated heart and vascular disease, and is associated with low birth weight and prematurity when used by pregnant women. Animal models suggest long-term structural changes occur in the brains of youth exposed to nicotine, notably in the areas controlling intellect and the brain's reward pathways.¹

Adolescents and young adults are particularly susceptible to the addictive effects of nicotine because their brains are still developing and in fact the vast majority of smokers begin before age 18. Studies show an association between youth nicotine use and behavioral problems in later life such as depression, anxiety and other substance abuse.²

Not everyone realizes that electronic cigarettes are unregulated. They are available for purchase by anyone of any age. We know young people are increasingly using electronic cigarettes. This should come as no surprise since they are obvious targets for the billions of dollars spent marketing these products. Public health surveys have confirmed increasing use of these products among young people in Oregon.³

¹ US Department of Health and Human Services, The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 years of progress. Atlanta, GA: US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

³ Oregon Public Health Division. CD Summary: E-cigarettes: Smokeless does not mean harmless. December 31, 2013 Vol.62, No 27.

Adolescence is a pivotal time in the life course where health is concerned. Prohibiting the sale of these products to our kids is an urgent public health priority.

Sadly, these nicotine products are even making their way into the hands of our youngest children. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, the number of cases managed by Poison Control Centers involving e-cigarettes containing nicotine rose from almost 300 in 2011 to more than 3000 in 2014; about half of these calls were in children under age six.⁴ Last December a one year old in New York died after ingesting liquid nicotine.⁵

As you consider the regulation of electronic cigarettes, please keep in mind that a meaningful attempt to keep young people from purchasing these products must include a conversation about the tobacco retail environment. Multnomah County is looking closely at the tobacco retail environment since we have one of the highest rates of illegal sales of tobacco to minors in the *country*. Oregon is one of only 11 states that does not require a license to sell tobacco, the leading cause of preventable death.

Finally, I would like to add my explicit support for the language in this bill that includes electronic cigarettes in Oregon's Indoor Clean Air Act. Protecting youth from nicotine addiction means maintaining our social norms that prohibit tobacco and nicotine use in public settings. Young people are watching their peers and the adults around them closely to establish their norms for adult behavior. We know that when young people perceive smoking to be the norm they are more likely to smoke.⁶

In addition, there is a growing body of evidence that electronic cigarette vapors are not just "water vapor." The science is limited because of the variability in liquid nicotine ingredients, but studies have detected varying levels of nicotine, carcinogens, volatile organic compounds, metals and other chemicals; users exhale fine particles which, like secondhand cigarette smoke, can penetrate deep into the lungs and blood stream.⁷ The fact that these particles are exhaled means bystanders can be exposed and "passively vape."⁸ Please apply the precautionary principle and consider the rights of those who choose not to use these products or be exposed to them in the workplace and other public places. From a purely practical standpoint, including electronic cigarettes in the Indoor Clean Air Act provides for a statewide solution rather than a patchwork of policies that will be difficult to enforce.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on this vital legislation.

⁴ E cigarette devices and liquid nicotine. Retrieved February 6, 2015, from <http://www.aapcc.org/alerts/e-cigarettes/>

⁵ N.Y. Toddler Dies From Liquid Nicotine Poisoning. (2014, December 15). Retrieved February 6, 2015, from <http://www.webmd.com/parenting/news/20141215/toddler-dies-liquid-nicotine>

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2012.

⁷ Grana, R., N. Benowitz, and S. Glantz, Background Paper on E-cigarettes. Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education, University of California, San Francisco and WHO Collaborating Center on Tobacco Control, 2013

⁸ Schripp, T., et al., Does e-cigarette consumption cause passive vaping? *Indoor Air*, 2012. 23(1): p. 25-31.

Respectfully,

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