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To the House Health Committee, Chair Greenlick and Members

From: Akili Kelekele, 8th grader, West Sylvan Middle School, Portland, Oregon

My name is Akili Kelekele, and I'd like to thank the chair and the committee for this opportunity to testify on HB 2546, regarding e-cigarettes. I'd like to start my testimony with an analogy.

No one knows the secret Krabby Patty formula, and probably never will. Though no one on Spongebob knows it, they still love and devour the Krabby Patties. Who knows if Mr. Krabs adds nicotine to the recipe? Maybe he disguises it with condiments? None of the Spongebob Characters will ever know what they are ingesting, and they haven't shown any interest in doing so.

That scenario is similar to what's going on with kids and eCigarettes. eCigarettes are a detriment to our society, and I believe that the corporations who produce them are deceiving their potential customers. If this product is going to be tolerated in Oregon, there needs to be some action taken to safeguard the people. That's why I've come to testify in favor of HB 2546 today.

For my block class at school, I did a bit of research on this topic, because I care a lot about the issue. I learned that eCigarettes were started because cigarettes were going out of style due to their dangers, and cigarette companies needed a new market. According to www.drugabuse.gov, "Although unacceptably high numbers of youth continue to smoke, these numbers represent a significant decrease from peak smoking rates (21 percent in 8th-graders, 30 percent in 10th-graders, and 37 percent in 12th-graders) that were reached in the late 1990s." A

significant decrease in youth addiction shows that America has gradually moved away from traditional, tobacco cigarettes. Because tobacco companies were realizing rapidly abating profits, the eCigarette was invented to keep America smoking and Big Tobacco solvent. According to dispatch.com, “Philip Morris International’s fourth-quarter profit dropped 19 percent as cigarette sales fell in overseas markets and it was hurt by foreign exchange rates for the U.S. dollar.” Clearly, people around the globe were starting to realize how harmful cigarettes are.

The main tactic companies such as Philip Morris use to sustain their companies is diversifying to eCigarettes, which they advertise to children. They know that if they marketed toward children, they will hook them on smoking at a young age, thereby creating life-long consumers, and possibly make smoking “cool” again. ABC news notes that, “Cigarette ads may have been banned from television since 1971, but that hasn’t stopped electronic cigarette makers from placing TV ads likely to be seen by children and young adults.”

It appalls me that the people of our nation haven’t taken one step toward fixing that, and it’s just shooting ourselves in the foot. There are few regulations that restrict children from purchasing eCigarettes at a local convenience store either, despite the fact that researchers have begun to document the harms of eCigarettes. Portland State University researchers say that, “e-Cigarette vapor can contain hidden formaldehyde at levels five to 15 times higher than regular cigarettes,” Formaldehyde is a toxic chemical that can be found in germicide, pesticides, and some disinfectants. No-smoke.org revealed that “electronic smoking devices (ESDs) do not just emit ‘harmless water vapor.’ Secondhand aerosol (incorrectly called vapor by the industry) from ESDs contains nicotine, ultrafine particles and low levels of toxins that are known to cause cancer,” the exposure to such aerosols could cause respiratory problems like asthma, and clog one’s arteries, leading to heart attack.

Propylene glycol is another ingredient found in the electronic device. If propylene glycol is heated (which it is in eCigarettes) it changes its chemical composition, emitting traces of propylene oxide, a harmful carcinogen. eCigarettes aren't regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, so therefore they don't have to disclose any ingredients.

I am a young Oregonian who is glad for recent attempts to try to fix the eCigarette problem. This 2015 legislature is considering several good bills, including this one, to address this problem. For instance, one bill would stop eCigarette manufacturers from producing flavorful eCigarettes because, as mentioned by Senator Laurie Monnes Anderson, "flavoring is just another way to hook people on nicotine."

On February ninth of this year, a teenager in Anaheim, California got injured at his home. The Police were told by witnesses that the young man was holding an eCigarette shortly before the explosion that maimed him. Detectives believe that the eCigarette was the reason for the explosion. eCigarette companies don't give any ingredients on their packages, so who knows if one of the ingredients could be explosive when overheated? That's another reason why eCigarettes need to be addressed federally, because we can't keep playing games with the corporations. The corporations are playing the role of the "perfect child," joyful and bubbly when around adults, in the companies' case, Americans, and mischievous when by themselves. If they want to stay in business they need to work as hard as other businesses have had to.

You may wonder why I, an eighth grader, would care about this. It's because eCigarettes have affected my peer group. In the spring of 2014, there was a school get-together at a local elementary school. There were a group of kids who had eCigarettes. They asked my friends and me to try some in the woods. We of course politely declined their request. As they were asking us to try it, they also told us that they had bought it themselves at a convenience store in proximity of our school. At that point, my friends and I were shocked. Our jaws dropped all the

way down to our knees. We couldn't believe our government, that we so heavily trust, is letting the corporations like Blu get away with selling to minors. There was another get-together about a month after the first, and this took place at a different school. The same group of kids who initially introduced eCigarettes to West Sylvan, got more kids to join in on the act this second time.

This same experience could be encountered by many other children in Oregon if there isn't action taken in this 2015 legislative session. I luckily didn't have to go through the whole peer pressure part of it. When I said no, the kids just went on to do their own thing, and didn't bother me. Elsewhere, perhaps peer pressure is a realistic thing for a teenager to face in these types of situations, and being a teenager myself, I know that peer pressure is not easy to deal with. Every kid just wants to be socially accepted. If we let eCigarettes be part of the norm, Oregonians won't see the 100% graduation rate expected by 2025. You may wonder how eCigarettes affect a child's academic success. Well hypothetically, if a kid is inclined to try eCigarettes in middle school, he probably will also be willing to try other drugs that are considered "cool" in high school. Drug use will inevitably become a barrier to students who go down that path. My goal in coming before this committee is to suggest that you look at the potential consequences of eCigarettes on our students. If banning them entirely is not an option, please make sure that kids like me do not have legal access to them. Please pass HB 2546. Thank you for considering my testimony.