

Multnomah County Health Department



February 2, 2016

Senate Health Care Committee
900 Court St. NE- HR A
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: SB 1559 – Tobacco Retail Licensing

Chair Monnes Anderson, members of the committee, my name is Tricia Tillman and I am the Director of the Public Health Division at Multnomah County Health Department . I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of SB 1559. Tobacco retail licensing (TRL) is the critical link Oregon communities need to reduce youth access to tobacco and nicotine products, level the playing field for businesses, and enforce our tobacco and nicotine laws.

We strongly support efforts to reduce the impact of tobacco and nicotine in our community to prevent youth access. This is especially important since Multnomah County has one of the highest rates of illegal cigarette sales to minors. This is evidenced by some of our recent policy making in Multnomah County. Last March, our Board of Commissioners passed an ordinance restricting the sales of electronic cigarettes to minors and prohibiting the use of these products in workplaces. Additionally, in November the Board passed our own local ordinance requiring all retailers who sell tobacco and/or nicotine products to pay a fee for a license as a key strategy to protect our youth from the harms of tobacco and nicotine.

Many states and local jurisdictions across the country have implemented local TRL policies. According to the Centers for Disease Control, as of the first quarter of 2015, only nine states do not require a tobacco retail license, Oregon being one of them. Tobacco is the only addictive (and potentially deadly) product that can be sold without a license. Oregon requires a license to sell many other products such as prescription drugs, alcohol, lottery, and even a Christmas tree, but not tobacco.

We have developed our local tobacco retail licensing ordinance by engaging community members across the spectrum of geography, race and ethnicity, language groups, and sectoral/organizational diversity that exists within the county. If statewide tobacco retail licensing is passed, Multnomah County stands ready to guide and provide input into ensuring engagement of diverse community voices that will help to ensure an equitable public health policy.

As many of you know, tobacco use remains the number one preventable cause of death. Tobacco retail policies that reduce exposure to tobacco products and marketing are components of comprehensive tobacco policies that help reduce tobacco use which, in turn, reduces the burden of tobacco use on our health care systems.

We appreciate your dedication to this very important issue and want to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. I am happy to take any questions and comments you may have.

Sincerely,

Tricia Tillman, Director
Public Health Division
Multnomah County Health Department