



WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON

April 8, 2019

House Committee on Revenue
lro.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov

RE: HOUSE BILL 2270

Dear House Committee on Revenue:

On behalf of Washington County Department of Health and Human Services, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to offer comment in response to House Bill 2270, which increases the tax on cigarettes and includes inhalant delivery devices in the definition of tobacco products for taxation purposes.

Tobacco use continues to remain the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. In Washington County, 570 people have died due to tobacco use, costing the community \$192.1 million dollars in lost productivity. Although the use of cigarettes has been declining, there has been a steady rise in other tobacco related products, especially among youth. In 2018 both the FDA and the Surgeon General declared that youth use of e-cigarettes and vaping is an epidemic that requires historic action. Vaping has become so popular that in Washington County, 29% of 11th graders have tried an e-cigarette/vaping product at some point and 16% used the products in the last 30 days.

Raising taxes on tobacco products is a proven strategy to reduce consumption, and including inhalant delivery devices in the definition of tobacco products for taxation purposes would also curb youth use of e-cigarettes/vapes. Research has shown that every 10% increase in the real price of cigarettes reduces adult smoking by about 2%, reduces smoking among young adults by about 3.5%, reduces the number of kids who smoke by 6-7%, and reduces overall cigarette consumption by approximately 3-5%. When compared to the general population, youth are as much as two to three times more sensitive to price, in part due to having less income available to spend on tobacco. Higher prices on tobacco products also interfere with the progression of youth experimentation and deter youth from becoming regular users.

Tobacco taxes are a public health policy win that raise revenue, reduce rates of tobacco use and save lives. Broadening the definition of tobacco products to include inhalant delivery systems would compound those public health benefits, while simultaneously addressing a public health epidemic that disproportionately affects our youth. To continue to support and protect the health of the public, Washington County supports House Bill 2270. Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Marni Kuyl, RN, MS
Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellow