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and work to achieve social justice.

## **HB 1550 - 2021-22 Concerning methods to prevent nicotine addiction**

Thank you Chair Woman Frame & Committee Members for hearing why we are in support of House Bill 1550.

My name is Heidi López, I am a Tobacco, Vape, E-Cig & Marijuana Prevention & Policy Specialist and am here today on behalf of El Centro de la Raza, The Center for People of all Races, a statewide organization grounded in the Latino community. As a multiracial member of this growing community of color, which includes the Latinx community, I am here to state our support for House Bill 1550. The tobacco and vapor industries have specifically targeted marketing toward Black, Indigenous, People of Color, LGBTQ, and other marginalized communities for decades. As a result, our communities, experience higher rates of nicotine use and result in higher health disparities amongst priority populations.

The 2016 Surgeon General's Report on E-Cigarette Use Among Youth and Young Adults found that "price policies are likely to reduce the use of e-cigarettes: a 10% increase in the price of e-cigarettes has been estimated to reduce sales of disposable e-cigarettes by approximately 12% and reusable products by about 19%." Why does this matter? 1 in 3 high school students in Washington reported vaping in the last month and this number is on the rise! This is a delicate time in their lives, as we know children are very impressionable especially during adolescence.

I had a personal experience with vaping amongst youth with my oldest middle-school aged boy whom is 13yrs old. During the fall of 2020, we were in the process of moving into our new home. Both him and his brother had gone to their dad's for his weekend, so I thought it would be a nice surprise for me to put their rooms together first in all the chaos from the move. While unpacking a box of items that belonged to my 13 year old, I found a flavored pod and e-cigarette setup in a backpack stuffed animal he has had since he was a baby. Of course, the product of choice was a Juul with a fruity type flavor. My son and I talked about the Juul & pod; of course, he denied it belonging to him. He was not sure what the "big deal" was if it is "just flavored juice." I was perplexed by this response and it was relevant that he was very naïve to the ingredients in these pods, especially Nicotine. After several weeks of being grounded and being by my side in my youth prevention work in tobacco for El Centro de la Raza, he learned a lot about E0cigarettes and has made a wise decision to stay clear of all tobacco/nicotine products especially the flavored pods.

Now, where did he get the money for the E-cigarette setup and how did he get this product being only 13? These were two of my next biggest concerns as a parent. Children are a lot smarter than what we give them credit for at times and extremely clever. My Son had gotten the funds to purchase this product



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from moneys earned through allowances (me), birthday money, and of course Grandma; grandma always slips “a little something” in every grand-kiddos pocket when visiting. I was not able to figure out how he got the product, as he was very secretive about this; whether it was an 18yr old at the time or a retailer I am not sure. My point? It is very possible for children to get a hold of money to buy these products and figure out a way to purchase them if they become addicted and want it. If a higher tax rate were imposed on these products and were more “expensive”, I believe it would detour a child from purchasing them.

The proposed excise tax would be of huge resource in our efforts for Nicotine prevention & cessation. The bill states that these taxes would adequately fund public health by directing all moneys collected from the above-proposed tax, as well as the proposed 4.4% B&O surcharge, into the FPHSA for nicotine and substance use prevention, cessation, enforcement, education, and foundational public health services. As a parent of two middle school aged Boys, I cannot stress the importance of education, cessation and prevention resources on Nicotine whether it is vaped or smoked. I do not believe there is a parent, aunt, uncle, or grandparent out there that wants their loved one to become addicted to a substance, let alone one that we know is the leading cause of preventable death in the world!

At El Centro de la Raza, we continue to reach out to our LatinX community members in order to raise awareness about tobacco & vaping and the effects these products are having amongst our community members. We have developed youth prevention power-point presentations and collaborated with Latin Youth organizations to help spread our message about being tobacco free and why. These presentations and information are given in both Spanish & English to reach as many members of our LatinX community as possible in our culturally related efforts in the fight against tobacco use & addiction amongst youth and young adults. Aside from our PowerPoint presentations being a huge ongoing success, our culturally related efforts are reflected in our collaborated work, by attending legislative meetings related to youth tobacco use, prevention, and constant trainings to keep our skill set up to date in youth tobacco prevention. The money collected from taxes would help organizations like El Centro de la Raza, continue to be successful in its fight for tobacco cessation/prevention.

We appreciate your time today in allowing us to show our support for House Bill 1550 with consideration to enact a 33% excise tax rate instead of the current proposed 45% excise tax. Thank you!

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### **HB 1550 - 2021-22 Concerning methods to prevent nicotine addiction**

Thank you Madam Chair Frame & Committee Members for hearing why we are in support of House Bill 1550.

My name is Elena Ozturk, I am a Tobacco, Vape, and Marijuana Prevention Specialist and I am writing this testimony on behalf of El Centro de la Raza, a statewide organization grounded in the Latino community. I would like to express my support for House Bill 1550 as it aligns with our efforts on tobacco and vape prevention by effectively addressing the threats of commercial tobacco and reducing the impact of tobacco related cancers with a focus on reducing disparities in underserved Latinx communities.

In Washington state, according to the 2018 Washington Healthy Youth Survey, 1 in 3 high school students reported vaping in the last month. This clearly shows how concerning our youth are becoming addicted to nicotine through vaping since not many people realize that e-cigarettes, such as JUUL, also contain nicotine. Thus, House Bill 1550 reduces underage access to tobacco and vapor products and adequately funds nicotine and substance use prevention, cessation, enforcement, education, and foundational public health services.

As a parent, I would often worry about my 18-year-old becoming the latest victim of nicotine dependence when she was in high school. She expressed concerns about some of her peers vaping the fun flavors in the premises (restrooms or adjacent playground). Although she has never shown interest, we have talked about the dangers of vaping, just in case she ever felt pressured by others to vape out of curiosity alone. These fun flavors are there to hook our youth on nicotine, and seldom help those trying to quit smoking. For instance, my brother-in-law tried vaping instead of smoking combustible tobacco, and now smokes even more cigarettes than before.

The original bill is currently before the Committee asks to enact a 45% excise tax, however, based on recent feedback from stakeholders that we should try to get closer to parity with cigarettes, we would like to propose the excise tax rate to be 33% instead of 45%. This 33% excise tax will replace the current, ineffective vapor tax of nine cents per milliliter of liquid, which has neither significantly raised the price of vapor products enough to deter youth purchases nor generated significant funding for the Foundational Public Health Services Account (FPHSA). Also, we support the proposed 4.4% B&O surcharge on manufacturers and distributors of tobacco and vapor products since we believe they share responsibility and should not enjoy their current, preferential rate.



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HB 1550 also prioritizes community-based strategies that address health inequity and racial disparities. The tobacco and vapor industries have specifically targeted marketing toward Black, Indigenous, people of color, LGBTQ, and other marginalized communities for decades. As a result, these communities experience higher rates of nicotine use and resulting health disparities.

We appreciate your time today by allowing us to show our support for House Bill 1550 to enact a 33% excise tax rate instead of the current proposed 45% excise tax, which will protect Youth from Vaping and Fund Public Health.

Respetuosamente,

Elena Ozturk

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### **HB 1550 - 2021-22 Concerning methods to prevent nicotine addiction**

Thank you Committee Members for hearing our support of House Bill 1550.

My name is Ileana López - Garakani and I am here today on behalf of El Centro de la Raza. As a Latina member of our community, I am here to state our support for House Bill 1550.

The tobacco and vapor industries have historically marketed towards people of color, black, indigenous and LGBTQ, communities for decades. As a result, our communities experiences higher rates of nicotine use.

My husband was a smoker of one pack of cigarettes' a day when he tried to quit. He began using a vape pen, only to learn that he is actually smoking more than a pack of cigarettes a day. This is a perpetual problem and an underlying issue with Vaping. We agree an excise tax is necessary in our fight for tobacco use prevention amongst youth & young adults; however, one in three high school students in Washington State reported vaping in the last month.

The proposed excise tax is a significant resource towards our efforts for nicotine prevention & cessation. I cannot stress the importance of education, cessation and prevention resources of nicotine whether it is smoked or vaped as they are equally harmful.



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We appreciate your time today in allowing us to show our support  
for House Bill 1550.

Kind regards,

Ileana Lopez – Garakani

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