

Letter to Rep. Pollet:

HB 1550 - 2021-22 Regarding 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 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 with a focus on reducing disparities in underserved Latinx communities.

The tobacco and vapor industries have historically marketed towards people of color, black, indigenous and LGBTQ, communities for decades. As a result, our communities experience higher rates of nicotine use. This bill is currently before the Committee, and asks to enact a 45% excise tax to replace the current, ineffective vapor tax of nine cents per milliliter of liquid,

We agree an excise tax is necessary in our fight for tobacco use prevention amongst youth & young adults; however, we would like to propose the excise tax rate to be 33% instead of 45% based on feedback from stakeholders in order to parity with cigarette taxes.

My husband was a smoker of one pack of cigarettes' a day when he tried to quit. He began using nicotine vape products in order to cut back his smoking habit, only to learn that he is actually smoking more than a pack of cigarettes a day, the math more precisely equals up to 80 cigarettes per a typical single vape pen. 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.

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

Kind regards,

Ileana López - Garakani