



6800 W. 93rd Street | Overland Park, KS 66212
www.heart.org

Testimony in Support of HB 2315 14 February 2017

Chairman Johnson and members of the Committee. My name is Kevin Walker and I am Regional Vice President of Advocacy for the American Heart Association.

The American Heart Association is committed to improving the cardiovascular health of all Kansans and tobacco use runs counter to our efforts. Smoking continues to be the leading preventable cause of death in Kansas and there is very strong evidence that increased cigarette taxes drive consumption down – particularly among youth. While we support the tobacco tax increases included in the bill we believe a larger increase would be more impactful toward improving the health of Kansans.

A larger increase produces greater health benefits and is less susceptible to manipulation by the tobacco industry through the discounting and couponing they employ to blunt the impact of the increases.

The tobacco industry knows full well that significant price increases are an effective cessation tool and a threat to their bottom line. These comments are direct quotes from industry sources that were revealed in documents released during litigation against the tobacco companies.

- Philip Morris: *"A high cigarette price, more than any other cigarette attribute, has the most dramatic impact on the share of the quitting population...price, not tar level, is the main driving force for quitting."*
- RJ Reynolds: *"If prices were 10% higher, 12-17 incidence [youth smoking] would be 11.9% lower."*

It is important that any tax increase you consider on tobacco be substantial enough to achieve a health benefit and avoid manipulation by the tobacco industry. The proposed increases in HB 2315 will provide benefit but an increase of \$1.50 per pack and an equitable increase in the tobacco products tax will provide an even greater health benefit and more than \$110 million in new revenue to the State.

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We urge you to amend HB 2315 by elevating the proposed increase to \$1.50 per pack of 20-cigarettes and elevating the tobacco products tax to 65% of wholesale to achieve parity between the two tobacco-related taxes included in this bill. Equalizing the tax imposed on cigarettes and other tobacco products supports cessation by discouraging a shift from one product to a lower-priced product that is equally harmful to one's health.

As you deliberate during the session you have an opportunity to not only address a budget shortfall but do so in a way that provides lasting health benefits. There are very few options you have to generate new revenue while simultaneously providing a lasting health benefit. An increased tobacco tax is one of those options.

Imagine the benefit to Kansas when fewer kids start to smoke. Imagine the benefit to Kansas when fewer low-birthweight pregnancies occur due to smoking. Imagine the benefit to Kansas when more people quit smoking and embark on a healthier lifestyle free from tobacco. Imagine the benefit to Kansas when smoking rates decline and the incidence of death and disability from chronic disease declines as well.

We appreciate your consideration and urge you to significantly increase the tobacco tax in Kansas.

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Please remember: The American Heart Association is your ally.

