



March 22, 2018

Steve Coen, President and CEO
Kansas Health Foundation

Testimony for Senate Committee on Assessment and Taxation in support of SB 376 – Written Only

Chairperson Tyson and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on SB 376, to reduce tobacco use through increased taxes. We appreciate your willingness to receive testimony and to discuss this critical health issue for the people of Kansas in a very transparent way.

The Kansas Health Foundation has been a long-time proponent of efforts to reduce tobacco use, because it is the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States and Kansas. We know that tobacco use affects many groups across Kansas -- pregnant women (and low birthweight babies), children being exposed to second-hand smoke, youth who begin smoking, individuals with mental illness, lower-income Kansans, minorities and long-term smokers. In Kansas, the adult smoking rate is 17.2 percent, which ranks 26th in the nation, according to the 2017 America's Health Rankings report.

Over the years, the Kansas Health Foundation has worked to increase awareness and has pursued tobacco policy changes to make Kansas a healthier state. We created several statewide awareness campaigns focused on second-hand smoke, including "Take it Outside" and "It's not only smokers who get sick." We helped many Kansas communities implement Clean Indoor Air policies. We have helped promote tobacco-free workplaces, schools and college campuses. We've also provided grants to mental health organizations to help reduce the incidence of smoking among those experiencing mental illness. Kansas adults with mental illness are twice as likely to use tobacco than those without mental illness. We believe an increased tobacco tax is another tool to help change our state's environment by reducing tobacco use.

At the Kansas Health Foundation, we want to work with Kansans to create a healthier state for generations to come. Reducing tobacco use is critical to individual and community health, and an increased tobacco tax could help with that effort. We appreciate the opportunity to work with local and state partners to improve the health of all Kansans.

Background on the Kansas Health Foundation

The Kansas Health Foundation is based in Wichita, but statewide in its focus. With a mission to improve the health of all Kansans, KHF envisions a culture in which every Kansan can make healthy choices where they live, work and play. To achieve this, KHF focuses its work in four impact areas: access to affordable health care, healthy behaviors, civic and community engagement and educational attainment. During its 30-year history, KHF has provided more than \$500 million in grants to Kansas communities and organizations, and looks forward to working toward its mission and vision for many years to come.