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**House Committee on Insurance and Pensions**  
**Proponent for HB 2129**  
**February 10, 2021**

Chairman Johnson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 2129. Oral Health Kansas is the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public, so Kansans know that all mouths matter. We stand in support of HB 2129 to expand insurance benefits for tobacco cessation under the State Employee Health Plan.

Tobacco use continues to be the number one cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, with nearly one in four Kansas adults using at least one form of tobacco products.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco use also has a significant impact on both oral and overall health. Smoking leads to reduced effectiveness of treatment for gum disease, as well as increased risk of mouth pain, cavities, and gum recession which leads to tooth loss. Smokers are about twice as likely to lose their teeth than non-smokers and significant tooth loss can make it difficult to manage chronic diseases, such as diabetes.

Tobacco cessation programs are an effective method of treating tobacco dependence, and increased access to these services will not only improve the health of Kansans but could also save the state millions in tobacco-related illnesses. A recent study prepared by the University of Kansas School of Medicine for the National Alliance on Mental Illness – Kansas, showed that expanding the insurance benefits for tobacco cessation from two quit attempts to four would produce a net economic gain by year 4.<sup>2</sup>

Oral Health Kansas is dedicated to reducing the harm caused by tobacco products, and we are happy to support HB 2129. We urge the Committee to pass the bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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Policy Director  
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<sup>1</sup>(2020). Adult Tobacco Use in Kansas. doi: [https://www.kdheks.gov/tobacco/download/Adult\\_Tobacco\\_Use\\_in\\_KS.pdf](https://www.kdheks.gov/tobacco/download/Adult_Tobacco_Use_in_KS.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>Gurley-Calvez, T., PhD, MA, & Sand, J., MPH. (2020). The Economics of Expanded Smoking Cessation Treatment (Rep.). Kansas. doi: <https://tinyurl.com/ROI-study>