

February 20, 2006

TO: House Committee on Health and Human Services

FROM: Linda J. De Coursey, Advocacy Director – Kansas

RE: HB 2739 – Tobacco Use in Medical Care Facility Buildings and Property

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

My name is Linda De Coursey and I am appearing on behalf of the American Heart Association in support of HB 2739. The proposed bill prohibits the use of tobacco in a medical care facility building or on their property, except that an area may be established for residents of a licensed long-term care unit for a designated smoking area if the area is well-ventilated.

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in the U.S., claiming more than 400,000 lives annually, with 170,000 of those deaths coming from smoking related cardiovascular disease. In Kansas, tobacco use leads to approximately 4,000 smoking related heart disease deaths, and the amount of dollars spent on tobacco-related illnesses is staggering (\$720 million annually in direct health care costs).

Second-hand smoke is responsible for almost 38,000 deaths annually among adult nonsmokers in the U.S., deaths caused by heart disease and lung cancer. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at increased risk for pneumonia, bronchitis, ear infections, and tonsillitis. Second hand smoke contains the same toxic substances as the smoke inhaled by smokers (mainstream smoke). Of the more than 4,000 chemicals in second hand smoke (including nicotine, formaldehyde, cyanide, arsenic, carbon monoxide, methane, asbestos, ammonia and benzene), at least 40 are considered carcinogens. Many of these toxins are actually found in higher concentrations in second hand smoke than they are in mainstream smoke. Even the newest ventilation technologies under ideal conditions are incapable of removing all secondhand smoke and its toxic constituents from the air.

When we consider the basis of the Hippocratic oath – first, do no harm, of all places when we have to go to a hospital, the least that should be expected of all of us is to do no harm to one another. But when tobacco smoke is present, we have no choice but to breathe the air that is filled with smoke.

Smoking is a major risk factor for the No.1 cause of death in our state – cardiovascular diseases like heart disease and stroke, and the American Heart Association is dedicated to reducing tobacco use as one way to reduce death and disability from cardiovascular disease and stroke. We respectfully ask your favorable consideration of this bill. Thank you again for your time.

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