

February 19, 2015

Shannon Cotsoradis, President and CEO
Kansas Action for Children
Testimony for House Taxation Committee Hearing on House Bill 2306

Chairman Kleeb and members of the Committee:

Kansas Action for Children is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to shaping health, education and economic policy that improves the lives of Kansas children and families. On behalf of the children of Kansas, we support HB 2306.

As part of Kansas Action for Children's efforts to ensure all Kansas children grow up healthy, we look for data-driven policies that can improve the health of children and their families. It is clear that increasing the tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products will improve children's health.

Increasing the tax on cigarettes and tobacco products will prevent 26,800 Kansas children from ever starting to smoke.

Increasing the price of tobacco products is one of the most effective ways to prevent and reduce youth smoking. For each 10% increase in the price of cigarettes and other tobacco products, there is a 7% decrease in youth smoking. Previous tax increases have helped to lower youth smoking rates, but there is much more work to be done.

In the 2013-14 school year, 8.45% of 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grade students who completed the Communities That Care Survey reported recently using cigarettes or smokeless tobacco. But the rate of youth tobacco use varies widely within the state; in some counties, more than 20% of youth report using tobacco recently. Each year, more than 2,900 Kansas kids become daily smokers.

The tax increase will reduce adults smoking and protect children from secondhand smoke.

For each 10% increase in the price of cigarettes and other tobacco products, there is a 3% to 5% decrease in adult smoking rates. Reduced adult smoking benefits children by reducing exposure to second hand smoke. Secondhand smoke contributes to asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia and ear infections.

By raising the tax on cigarettes and tobacco products, the state can prevent death and disease. This, in turn, saves the state in future Medicaid and other health care costs. For these reasons, we respectfully request that committee members act to save lives and prevent illness by supporting HB 2306.



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