



**Testimony to House Federal and State Affairs Committee
Supporting HB2563
February 13, 2020
The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce**

The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce (KC Chamber) urges the House Federal and State Affairs Committee to favorably pass House Bill 2563. The KC Chamber, representing over 2,000 businesses in the Greater Kansas City area (40 percent in Kansas), firmly believes tobacco prevention and cessation directly impacts business productivity and Kansas' economy. The Chamber supports bills like HB2563 that deter individuals from beginning usage of tobacco and other nicotine delivery products and encourages cessation of these addictive and harmful products. For years, the KC Chamber and its Healthy KC Coalition have championed tobacco cessation policies across Kansas and are eager to lend its support to this bill.

Each year, more businesses discover that employees who smoke cost their businesses in health care and insurance costs and in lost productivity. The average annual cost to a private employer for each of its employees who use tobacco is \$5,816. Besides being a hindrance on economic productivity for the state, tobacco usage also costs taxpayers by driving up publicly born health care costs.

Confirming the federal law of raising the sales age of tobacco and nicotine delivery products to 21 will have a significant impact on the amount of tobacco users in the State of Kansas according to extensive research on the issue. Research shows that 95% of smokers started before they were 21 and that those who had their first cigarettes by age 18 are almost twice as likely to become lifelong smokers as those who have not tried it by age 21. HB2563 will also reduce the number of teens and youth using vaping products by banning many flavored vaping products. While we would prefer to see a full vaping flavor ban that includes menthol products, which are increasingly becoming the flavor of choice for our young people, we believe the language drafted is a meaningful step for young Kansans. According to the National Youth Tobacco Survey, there was a 78% increase in e-cigarette use among high school students in 2018 and an increase in overall tobacco use which reverses previous declines. Vaping and e-cigarettes are dangerously misleading as well. Nearly 31 % of teens start smoking traditional cigarettes within 6 months of vaping (compared to 8.1% who do not) and 66% of teens believe there is "just flavoring" in e-cigarettes.

We are especially pleased to see that usage and possession penalties are not included in this proposal, as we believe these policies are less effective and burdensome on local law enforcement agencies.

According to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the United States killing more people than alcohol, AIDS, car accidents, illegal drugs, murders and suicides—combined. In Kansas, this translates to 4,400 lives every year.

HB2563 represents a responsible and effective health care solution to support Kansas employers, employees, health care providers and communities. The State of Kansas can take an important step at improving the lives for our youth and Kansas' workforce by implementing the provisions in HB2563. The KC Chamber and its Board of Directors encourages this committee to pass HB2563 with a favorable recommendation.

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