



**House Committee on Federal and State Affairs
Representative John Barker
Testimony (support) HB 2563 – Written Only**

Chair Barker and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on HB 2563, to reduce tobacco use through increased minimum purchase age and restricted access to purchase. We appreciate your willingness to receive testimony and to discuss this critical health issue for the people of Kansas.

The Kansas Health Foundation has long supported efforts to reduce tobacco use – the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the United States and Kansas. We know that tobacco use adversely affects many groups across Kansas – pregnant women (and low birthweight babies), children 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 30th in the nation, according to the 2019 America’s Health Rankings report. The national adult smoking rate is 16.1 percent.

The usage trend among youth is even more troubling. More than 25.8 percent of Kansas high school students report using at least one tobacco product (including e-cigarettes). E-cigarette use is increasingly popular, with 22 percent of Kansas high school students currently using these products, and 48.6 percent report having ever tried e-cigarettes. Predictably, among the most common reasons students provide regarding their e-cigarette use is they are “available in flavors, such as mint, candy, fruit, or chocolate.” (KSDE, 2019 Kansas Youth Risk Behavior Survey)

These flavored products (whether e-cigarettes, cigars, cigarettes or smokeless tobacco) raise a significant concern for us. Youth are more likely to use menthol or mint-flavored products than older smokers. We would encourage the Committee to consider a ban for all tobacco/e-cigarette products that contain menthol or flavors. In addition, we would encourage steps to redefine “smoking” and “e-cigarettes” to include all vaping devices.

Over the years, the Kansas Health Foundation 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.” This, and our work with local clean indoor air policies for Kansas communities and other partners, led to the statewide Clean Indoor Air act. KHF has funded work for tobacco-free workplaces, schools and college campuses and most recently worked with mental health organizations to reduce the incidence of smoking among those experiencing mental illness.

At the Kansas Health Foundation, we want to work with Kansans to create a healthier state for generations to come. Restricting all youth tobacco access is critical to prevent/reduce tobacco use and prevent addiction and lifelong chronic disease.

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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.