



February 19, 2015

House Committee on Taxation
HB 2306

Dear Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Committee on Taxation,

According to the United States Surgeon General, **61,000 Kansas children alive today will eventually die prematurely from a smoking-related disease.** Given what we know about the harm caused by smoking, this is unacceptable. The Kansas Health Foundation favors increasing taxes on cigarettes and other tobacco products to help ensure these children grow up tobacco free and can live their lives to their full potential.

Smoking is the leading preventable cause of death in Kansas, costing our state nearly one billion every year in entirely avoidable health care costs. However, there are actions Kansas can take to ensure the next generation is not burdened with these costs. Raising taxes on tobacco products reduces youth smoking. Every ten percent increase in the price of cigarettes reduces the number of youth who smoke by six to seven percent.

Raising the cigarette tax by \$1.50 will reduce the number of Kansas children who smoke by 20%. That is **26,800 Kansas kids who will never experience the devastating personal toll of tobacco.** Dramatically reducing youth smoking will benefit the entire generation of children alive today by reducing future health care costs. This action will make Kansas a healthier, more economically vibrant state.

We know most smokers want to quit. **As a result of raising tobacco taxes at the rates considered, nearly 25,000 adult smokers will quit.** The state of Kansas has support available to help smokers quit – particularly Kansans with lower levels of income. Each of the managed care plans in KanCare offer robust smoking cessation benefits. By simply promoting these existing benefits, Kansas can help maximize the health impact of the proposed tax increases.

The Kansas Health Foundation wants Kansas to be the healthiest, most productive, most livable state in the nation. For that to happen, we know Kansas children should never start using tobacco and adult smokers should be able to quit. Unfortunately, we are not headed in the right direction. Kansas has fallen behind many other states in reducing adult smoking. **In 1991, Kansas had the 8th lowest adult smoking rate in the nation. Today, we have dropped all the way to 31st.** We believe Kansas can do better!

Raising tobacco taxes makes health and economic sense for the state of Kansas. However, we know more could be done to prevent kids from starting and help adult smokers quit. We hope



the legislature considers expanding support for the state's existing tobacco prevention and smoking cessation efforts.

Combined with a strong focus on prevention, raising tobacco taxes will have tremendous impact on the health of Kansas children. **Raising tobacco taxes is pro-children and pro-Kansas.** We hope you will support this important opportunity.

Jeffrey Willett
Vice President for Programs
Kansas Health Foundation