



Midwest Affiliate
6800 W. 93rd Street Overland Park, KS 66212
www.heart.org

Testimony In Support of SB 462

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 462. My name is Kevin Walker and I am Regional Vice President of Advocacy for the American Heart Association.

For years our organization has worked tirelessly to educate the public regarding the well-documented health hazards related to tobacco use. More than 400,000 Americans die each year of smoking-related illnesses. Close to 180,000 of these deaths annually are related to cardiovascular diseases. In addition to educating the public we have supported scientifically sound public policies to discourage tobacco use among people of all ages including increased taxes on tobacco products, clean indoor air laws and restrictions on products designed to appeal to minors.

As smoking rates have declined the tobacco industry has attempted to find new ways to expand their customer base. This bill seeks to modernize Kansas laws regarding tobacco products to keep ahead of the creative marketing of the industry. Furthermore, the bill also modifies the manner in which taxes are imposed on these products and establishes additional restrictions on the sale of tobacco products in an effort to minimize the access minors.

Evidence is clear that the overwhelming majority of smokers begin the habit before the age of 18. Conversely, we know that if someone reaches the age of 18 without becoming a smoker the chances are great that they never will. Making tobacco products unattractive via pricing, difficult to obtain through strict access policies and robust public education creates an environment that helps everyone – especially youth - avoid the pitfalls of becoming a smoker. This translates to fewer smokers, medical cost savings and ultimately lives saved.

The American Heart Association supports the changes proposed in the bill and we encourage the Committee to approve these changes and forward the bill for consideration by the full Senate.