



**Health Care
Foundation**
OF GREATER KANSAS CITY

House Committee on Taxation
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

February 14, 2017

Dear Chairman Johnson and Members of the House Committee on Taxation:

Thank you for hearing testimony about a tobacco tax increase. I urge you to support the important work reflected in HB 2315.

I wanted to introduce myself to you. I am the CEO of the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City. We work on behalf of the uninsured and underserved of Johnson, Wyandotte and Allen counties as well as 3 counties in Missouri. We give \$20 million in grants per year to work toward health in our communities.

You will hear many people talk about the merits of a tobacco increase today. I think that the most compelling aspects of this discussion are these.

- Reducing tobacco use is the single most effective means to impact health.
- Tobacco tax is one of the most effective tools to do so. Behavioral economics shows us that those that are the most price sensitive are **teenagers, pregnant women and low-income adults**.
- A reduction in smoking in these groups affects low birth weight and premature deliveries—an important area of Medicaid utilization.
- If a teenager can make it to 21 without smoking, they only have a 5% chance of becoming a smoker.

However, **dose matters**. Think of tobacco taxes like using an antibiotic. If you licked the penicillin pill every day, the medication would never work. Same thing with tobacco tax. It has to have a large enough dose, or increase, to be effective. Behavioral economists find that an increase of at least \$1 dollar per pack is needed to get that effect. The “dose” needs to be delivered all at once. Phased in taxes are ineffective.

I’m going to tell you that **I don’t care where the money goes**. The health benefit comes from the magnitude of the increase. I will selfishly hope that some of that money goes

to support smoking cessation efforts so we can fully capitalize on this historic opportunity but even if all of it was dedicated to General Revenue, it would be an unprecedented public health win.

I truly hope you will consider this as a means to address our structural budgetary deficits with a Kansas solution.

I would be happy to visit more about this at any time.

With appreciation for your service.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bridget McCandless MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bridget McCandless MD MBA FACP
President/CEO