



Mother & Child Health Coalition
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March 13, 2018

To: House Taxation Committee
Representative Steven Johnson, Chair

From: Susan McLoughlin, RN, MSN, CPNP
Mother & Child Health Coalition

Re: Governor's Tobacco and Alcohol Tax Proposals

Thank you for allowing me to provide testimony on behalf of Mother & Child Health Coalition, in support of House Bill 2231. Mother & Child Health Coalition believes that every child deserves a healthy start. It's the best gift we can give our children, our community and ourselves. This is why we are supporting House Bill 2231. The bill implements a \$1.50 per pack increase and equivalent tax on other tobacco products, and would generate approximately \$90 million annually in additional state revenues. The first \$5 million would be devoted to tobacco prevention and cessation projects.

The mission of Mother & Child Health Coalition is to work together with community partners and families to promote wellness and advocate for excellence in health care. Our Coalition strives to improve the health of women of childbearing age, infants, and children by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. Premature birth is the leading cause of death in the first month of life, and a major determinant of illness and disability among infants, including developmental delays, chronic respiratory problems and blindness. Premature birth affects 1 in every 12 babies born in Kansas and is the second leading cause of infant mortality in the state. While we do not yet know all of the causes leading to premature birth, the science on tobacco use is clear. Women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely than non-smokers to have a preterm or low birth weight baby. Kansas' current preterm birth rate is at 8.8%, with some of our counties as high as 9.8%. We can do better in Kansas.

A baby's first-year medical costs, including both inpatient and outpatient care, are about 10 times greater if born pre-term (\$32,325) as compared to full-term (\$3,325). Based on these estimates, for every 1,000 fewer babies born preterm, approximately \$29 million in first-year medical costs would be saved. In addition, exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy and after birth increases the risk of sudden unexplained infant death (SUID), a key contributor to infant mortality. We also know that a pregnant woman's exposure to smoke in Kansas is real and significant. In 2015, 11% of pregnant women (4,296) reported smoking during pregnancy.

The good news is that prematurity associated with smoking while pregnant is preventable. Smoking is the single most modifiable risk factor for adverse pregnancy outcomes in developed countries.

Whatever we can do to discourage women from smoking while pregnant and protect pregnant women and babies from the impacts of second-hand smoke is extremely worthwhile. This is why Mother & Child Health Coalition has joined the effort to raise the state tobacco tax by \$1.50, knowing that it is beneficial in preventing 3,500 smoking-affected pregnancies and births, with a cost savings of \$8.72 million for these pregnancies over the next five years. Considering the increase of the tobacco tax by \$1.50 would significantly help to improve birth outcomes in the state.

On behalf of the pregnant women and the babies we work to protect, Mother & Child Health Coalition urges the committee to support \$1.50 per pack increase and equivalent tax on other tobacco products, with \$5 million devoted to tobacco prevention and cessation programs, and recommend the investment of the remaining revenue in health programs. Please help us protect the health of our youngest Kansans!

Thank you for all that you do to support the health of Kansas residents.