



**National
Multiple Sclerosis
Society**

March 12, 2018

Representative Steve Johnson, Chair
House Committee on Taxation
Re: Cigarette Tax, Proponent

Chair Johnson and Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society regarding the proposal to increase cigarette tax in Kansas. The National MS Society is part of the DollarsAndSense4KS Coalition, which is a group that supports a \$1.50 per pack cigarette increase. The Coalition represents a broad expanse of organizations who know first-hand, the risk and negative health effects that smoking presents to the citizens in our state.

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, often devastating disease of the central nervous system, which disrupts the flow of information within the brain and body. The disease course is unpredictable and varies from person to person. Symptoms range from numbness and tingling in the extremities, to blindness and paralysis.

- Compared to non-smokers, smokers are almost two times more likely to be diagnosed with MS and more likely to be diagnosed with progressive multiple sclerosis.
- Passive (second hand) smoke exposure has also been associated with an increased risk of developing multiple sclerosis in adults and children.
- Once diagnosed with MS, smokers may experience more severe symptoms, increased relapse frequency, and greater disability compared to non-smokers.
- The risk of converting to secondary progressive MS, in which there is a progressive worsening of neurologic function and accumulation of disability over time, is higher and occurs more quickly in smokers than in non-smokers.

The National MS Society believes that a \$5 million-dollar investment in smoking prevention and cessation would improve the quality of life and health outcomes of people living with MS. This strikes to the very core of our mission. Everything we do is focused so that people affected by MS can live their best lives as we stop MS in its tracks, restore what has been lost and end MS forever. A \$1.50 cigarette tax helps move Kansas closer to that vision.

Sincerely,

Mary Reed Spencer, Kansas Chair
Government Relations Advisory Committee
National Multiple Sclerosis Society