



9 S. Jefferson Ave.

Iola, Kansas 66749

March 13, 2018

Representative Steven Johnson, Chairman
House Taxation Committee
Kansas State Capitol
300 SW 10th St.
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Dear Chairman Johnson and Members of the Taxation Committee,

Thrive Allen County is a nonprofit organization located in Iola that focuses on improving health, wellness, recreation, education, and economic conditions in our county. Our vision is that Allen County will become the healthiest rural county in Kansas, and we do this through supporting and encouraging programs, policies and resources that promote access to healthcare, healthy lifestyles and positive community conversation.

This testimony is submitted in support of HB2231, which increases the tobacco tax by \$1.50. As an organization that works intensively “on the ground” in rural Southeast Kansas we have seen firsthand the negative impacts of tobacco products, especially cigarettes, in our community. Thrive has 9 years of experience with tobacco related work through the Chronic Disease Risk Reduction program of KDHE. We have advocated for and passed smoke free parks in our two largest towns: Iola and Humboldt; held smoking cessation classes for pregnant mothers (25.6 % of pregnant women in Allen County report they smoke or live in a household that smokes); supported a new policy within the Southeast Kansas Multi-County Health Department that requires all employees to take the Brief Tobacco Intervention (BTI) training to be a resource for their clients; passed a tobacco free policy for the Allen County Farmers’ Market and Lehigh Portland Trails system; and most notably we were the first rural community in Kansas to pass Tobacco 21 in our county seat—Iola—in February 2016.

We also know the impact of state-level policy change, having been an early supporter of the Kansas Indoor Clean Air Act, which was enacted in 2010. Following its passage, we saw the use of tobacco drop locally and statewide. The BRFSS shows a decline in the number of Kansas adults who smoked in 2011—2016, from 22% to 17.2%, data which clearly show that tobacco use drops as policies to curb tobacco use are enacted, as HB2231 would do with the tobacco tax increase.

Thrive knows that raising the tobacco tax with the passage of HB2231 will better our community’s physical health, protect kids from a lifetime of tobacco use, reduce use among adults, and generate substantial increases in revenue. We strongly encourage and support the passage of HB2231.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David C. Toland", written in a cursive style.

David C. Toland
President and CEO