

March 22, 2018

The Honorable Caryn Tyson  
Assessment & Taxation Committee  
Kansas State Capitol  
10th and Jackson, Room 548-S  
Topeka, Kansas 66612

Re: Testimony in support of tobacco tax increase (SB 376) – oral proponent  
From: Hailey Kisner

Dear Senator Tyson:

I am writing this on behalf of my family, friends, and the community of Hutchinson. I'm currently a junior at Hutchinson High School. Growing up, I was fortunate enough to not be around tobacco, unlike a lot of my peers, and to this day I have never used tobacco. So, you must be curious as to why I am so passionate about a topic that doesn't even affect me. Well it does – in fact, tobacco use affects everyone. **I am here to share how tobacco has affected my life and why I support a tobacco tax increase.**

A little over six years ago, my family made the decision to adopt a little baby boy, my brother, and that is when my perspective of tobacco completely changed. Growing up, I was always taught that tobacco was bad for your health, which it is. In fact, tobacco remains the leading preventable cause of cancer and the leading cause of death in the U.S. For most of my childhood that is the way that I thought, **however it wasn't until we adopted my brother that I realized and began to comprehend the effects of tobacco and how dangerous and deadly it really was.**

One thing that a lot of people don't know about my brother is that he has special needs. His doctors say that it could be due to several things, but the fact that his birth-mother did drugs, drank, and smoked while she was pregnant is more than likely a contributing factor. Due to his birth mother's decisions, **I have seen firsthand how tobacco has affected him at school, both developmentally and emotionally, as well as at home.**

Seeing my little brother's struggles pushed me to get involved in tobacco control because I want to highlight the dangers of using tobacco and inform my peers and others about its harmful effects. **Significantly increasing the tax on cigarettes and tobacco will reduce use among Kansas adults and youth – and will prevent 3,400 pregnancies and births from being affected by smoking. That's 3,400 kids and families that won't face some of the challenges that mine has.**

Not only is my brother a big reason for my passion for tobacco advocacy but my peers have also motivated me to take a stand as well. A lot of people think that teens don't smoke anymore or that tobacco policies only affect people of the older generations. Well that isn't necessarily true. I am not sure about other Kansas schools, but in my school tobacco use, and the use of electronic nicotine devices, are very common. **Increasing the tax on cigarettes and tobacco products by \$1.50 would prevent 13,900 young people like me from ever starting to use tobacco.**

This bill will also boost funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs in Kansas by \$5 million. I can't express enough how important this bill truly is and how passing it would positively contribute to tobacco prevention efforts across Kansas. **Tobacco tax increases are one of the most effective ways to reduce smoking and other tobacco use, especially among kids.** Nationally, every 10 percent increase in cigarette prices reduces youth smoking by about seven percent and total cigarette consumption by about four percent.

I volunteer with RESIST, a youth-led, statewide movement created to fight against the tobacco industry's influence on Kansans. We know young people like us we are targets for tobacco companies' deceitful marketing tactics and we refuse to fall into their trap. We recognize and resist against Big Tobacco's influences and we are determined to reduce tobacco-use rates in Kansas. **I ask you to think about young people like me when you consider the tobacco tax proposal under discussion today in SB 376.**

By passing SB 376 and therefore increasing the state tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products by \$1.50, you can prevent 9,000 premature smoking-caused deaths and keep 13,900 Kansas children from becoming adult smokers. I hope that after hearing my personal story will change how you view tobacco, but more importantly will influence to vote yes. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Hailey Kisner  
Hutchinson, KS