



Healthy Communities W Y A N D O T T E

February 5, 2018
Irene Caudillo
HCW Policy Committee Chair
Proponent
SB 316

Chairwoman Schmidt and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 316. Healthy Communities Wyandotte (HCW) supports expanding access to medications that help people quit tobacco. Tobacco use, particularly our alarming high adult smoking rate of 25%, plays a significant role in contributing to death and disease in our community, which already ranks low for health outcomes in the state of Kansas.

This is an urgent issue in Wyandotte County. Tobacco addiction has led to devastating consequences for the health of families and the community as a whole due to the expensive burden of healthcare and lost productivity. Quitting one of the most addictive substances on the planet is incredibly difficult, which is why HCW works with community partners to encourage the use of medications to help people quit.

Medications make a difference for residents.

Consider the story of a WyCo resident who contacted the Health Department after seeing a press release announcing a short term opportunity to receive free Nicotine Replacement Therapy. She called the Health Department last July to thank staff for their work. It was her 54th birthday and she was ready to quit smoking. She had recently cared for her mother, who had lost her battle with lung cancer after a lifetime of smoking. This resident didn't want her children to experience caring for a parent suffering from a cancer that could be prevented. She also said that continuously buying Nicotine Replacement Therapy was expensive and that she was desperately looking for ways to obtain more since her insurance benefits weren't sufficient.

Wyandotte County residents want to quit using tobacco, the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Kansas. You can make it easier for them to quit and live longer, healthier lives by removing barriers to accessing medications.

Sincerely,

Irene Caudillo