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Proponent Testimony on HB 2340

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Thank you, Chairman Barker, Vice Chair Arnberger, and Ranking Democrat Ruiz. I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today in support of HB2340.

I have probably been more involved with this bill and how it has evolved more than any member in the Statehouse. I feel this is a very important piece of legislation. Originally, 2 years ago, I had wanted to promote and raise the legal age for the consumption of any/all tobacco products to age 21. The legal age in Kansas was 18 then. This was very topical because of the catastrophic downstream health effects of vaping, smoking, chewing on our teenagers and young adults in Kansas.

There was a great deal of language in that bill regarding vaping, flavor vapes, menthol cigarettes, etc. There was also language about increasing the vendor fee for sellers of tobacco products. All that language is gone. But, just to get a 'conformity bill' took 25 pages! I want to personally thank the Revisor for completing this bill draft.

As we were running this bill last year, the Federal Government raised the legal age for tobacco use of any kind to 21 --- in essence accomplishing my goal. However, the part that was not established was conformity with Federal Law to put us in line for Federal Grants as in SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) Grants and other monies for states that are in compliance with the federal law of 'Tobacco-21'.

Now you have before you HB2340 which is simply a conformity bill for 'Tobacco-21' and a restatement of the Kansas Clean Air Act of 2012. That's it.

Both of my parents died of tobacco related disease in their Mid 70's. Both began smoking as teenagers. Both should have lived another 10 years. This bill finishes the job, in my mind, to be sure the State of Kansas can continue to promote healthy lifestyles and no legal tobacco availability until age 21.

Representative John Eplee