



March 10, 2021

Dear House Preventive Health Policy Division Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of the American Heart Association to express our support of HF1721, a bill that would include comprehensive change to the tobacco tax and dedicate \$15M to the Minnesota Department of Health for prevention and treatment.

As the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, the AHA represents more than 100 million patients with cardiovascular disease (CVD). Tobacco use is a leading cause of CVD and is responsible for one out of four CVD deaths. Overall, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States, killing more than 480,000 people in America each year and accounting for nearly \$170 billion annually in health care costs nationally and \$2.51 billion in Minnesota.

One of the most effective strategies for reducing tobacco use, especially among youth and young adults, is to significantly increase tobacco excise taxes. Every state that has increased its cigarette tax by a substantial amount has benefitted from an increase in revenue and corresponding declines in tobacco use. The state of Minnesota collected nearly \$760 million in tobacco taxes and settlement fees last year, but just 1 percent of that on prevention and treatment. Through a significant, comprehensive tobacco tax increase, Minnesota could reduce health care costs and improve health outcomes by dedicating \$15M to prevention and cessation programs.

During the present times of combatting COVID-19, an infection that aggressively attacks the lungs, those who smoke and develop COVID-19 are at increased risk of severe illness. Sustained investment in these vital public health programs over the long term will prevent thousands of illnesses and deaths from tobacco use and save billions of dollars in medical expenses in the state of Minnesota.

We need to continue to do everything we can to protect the health of our young people and prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. I urge you to support HF1721.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jess Nolan", written over a horizontal line.

Jess Nolan  
Government Relations Director  
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