



March 10, 2021

Minnesota House Preventive Health Policy Division

Dear Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society. We support evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. At this critical moment with focus on protecting respiratory health, we must do everything in our power to keep our communities healthy and safe. We urge you to vote “yes” on this life-saving legislation to increase the tax on cigarettes by \$1.50 per pack, increase the tax on all other tobacco products, including e-cigarettes devices, to 97% of wholesale, and dedicate funds to prevention and treatment programs to prevent kids from starting to use tobacco and help adults quit.

In 2021, it is estimated that approximately 33,260 Minnesota residents will be diagnosed with cancer while 10,220 will die from the disease.<sup>i</sup> And a recent analysis from the American Cancer Society estimates 26% of cancer deaths in Minnesota were attributable to smoking in 2017.<sup>ii</sup>

Here in Minnesota, 13.8% of adults smoke and 20.5% of high school students use tobacco products.<sup>iii,iv</sup> Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and increases the risk for many types of cancer, heart attack, stroke, COPD, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and other diseases.<sup>v</sup> People who smoke or who used to smoke are at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Smoking is also a proven risk factor for cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and heart disease, which also put people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19. Regardless of any association with COVID-19, the adverse health effects of smoking are well-documented and irrefutable.

While the health costs of tobacco are high, this deadly product also costs the U.S. economy billions of dollars in preventable health care expenditures and lost worker productivity. The annual cost of smoking in Minnesota is estimated to be over \$7 billion: more than \$3 billion in excess health care costs and \$4 billion in lost productivity.<sup>vi</sup>

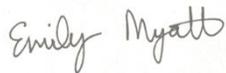
The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network and Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids estimate that a \$1.50 per pack increase would lead to major health gains, including 13,200 fewer kids becoming adult smokers, 24,300 adult smokers quitting and \$800 million in long-term health savings. Increasing the tax on all other tobacco products at the same time would produce additional health and economic benefits for Minnesota.

The good news is that a cigarette tax increase of \$1.50 per pack as contained in HF 1721 will result in a significant price increase, providing a strong antidote to the aggressive marketing tactics being employed by tobacco companies. In Minnesota, the tobacco industry spends \$110 million each year to market cigarettes and smokeless tobacco alone, not including their other deadly and addictive products.<sup>vii</sup>

HF 1721 provides \$15 million additional dollars to the state's comprehensive commercial tobacco control program to help support the prevention and cessation goals of this tax increase. Strengthening prevention and cessation resources in the state is particularly important to reducing tobacco-related health disparities so that all Minnesotans have access to resources to help them successfully quit tobacco, or avoid starting tobacco use altogether, regardless of income or other social determinants.

We urge you to vote "yes" on HF 1721 to increase the cigarette tax by \$1.50 per pack, increase the tax on all other tobacco products, including e-cigarette devices, to 97% of the wholesale price, and dedicate funds to tobacco prevention and treatment programs to save more Minnesota lives.

Sincerely,



Emily Myatt  
Minnesota Government Relations Director  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

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<sup>i</sup> American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts and Figures 2021*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2021.

<sup>ii</sup> American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. [State-Specific Smoking-Related Cancer Cases and Deaths, 2017](#). December 2020.

<sup>iii</sup> ClearWay Minnesota and Minnesota Department of Health. *Minnesota Adult Tobacco Survey: Tobacco Use in Minnesota: 2018 Update*. January 2019.

<sup>iv</sup> Helgertz SR. *Teens and Tobacco in Minnesota: Highlights from the 2020 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey*: Minnesota Center for Health Statistics, Minnesota Department of Health, February 2021.

<sup>v</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking*. Updated April 28, 2020. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/)

<sup>vi</sup> Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota. *Health Care Costs and Smoking in Minnesota*. January 2017.

<sup>vii</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. *The Toll of Tobacco in Minnesota*. Updated February 2021.