



Winona County ASAP
855 Mankato Ave
Winona, MN 55987
<https://www.winonacountyasap.org/>

March 9th, 2021

Minnesota House Preventive Health Policy Division

Dear Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

I represent Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition. This is a coalition who work together to create a culture free from the misuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs for our youth through community-wide collaboration. Our vision is to be community free from the negative consequences of tobacco abuse. ASAP provides awareness and education for substance abuse including tobacco prevention to the greater community. ASAP supports and encourage youth toward healthy life goals, unhindered by the misuse and effects of tobacco and other drugs.

I am writing to urge you to **support HF1721**, which includes comprehensive tobacco tax changes and funding for prevention and treatment. A tobacco price increase in Minnesota and would be a major win for health and Minnesota youth. Furthermore, now is the time to end the tax break on premium cigars, tax e-cigarette devices as tobacco products and conform to federal e-cigarette online sales rules to help our state keep pace with the ever-evolving tobacco industry.

Raising commercial tobacco prices helps prevent young people from using tobacco products, helps smokers quit and saves lives. The youth tobacco epidemic has erased decades of progress to reduce youth tobacco use. Price is a powerful tool, since research finds that young people are two to three times more responsive than adults to tobacco price increases. Every 10 percent increase in cigarette prices reduces youth smoking by more than 5 percent and youth initiation by 10 percent.

Minnesotans support increasing tobacco prevention funding and tobacco tax. A 2020 poll found 62 percent of Minnesotans favor increasing tobacco taxes and dedicating that revenue to funding prevention efforts. And 64 percent of Minnesota residents support increasing state funding for youth tobacco prevention by \$15 million a year.

Please adopt this lifesaving bill. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Helen Bagshaw
Vice Chair of Winona County Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention.