

North Dakota House Bill 1152 Related to Exempting Cigar Bars from ND Smoke-Free Law

Senate Industry, Business, and Labor Committee for the 67<sup>th</sup> Legislative Assembly

March 9, 2021 Hearing

Chairman Klein and members of the Senate Industry, Business, and Labor Committee. My name is Kelly Buettner-Schmidt. I am a resident of Fargo, ND, District 41. Although I am not speaking on behalf of North Dakota State University (NDSU), I am a professor of nursing at NDSU and I am an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) volunteer.

I am submitting a letter to the editor that I wrote and that was published in the Fargo Forum both online on 2/3/2021 and in print on 2/5/2021. It is attached below and available at <https://tinyurl.com/btfyb3vv>

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Buettner-Schmidt, PhD, RN, FAAN

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## Letter: Urge legislators to uphold smoke-free workplace laws in North Dakota

I am very concerned to learn that the ND Legislature is considering House Bill 1152 to exempt cigar lounges and bars that sell cigars from our statewide smoke-free law.

Written By: Kelly Buettner-Schmidt | 10:00 am, Feb. 3, 2021

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disability in this country. Additionally, smoking may increase a person's risk for serious complications from COVID-19. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. In 2012, North Dakotans voted overwhelmingly in support of a statewide smoke-free workplace law. This was after multiple local ND communities pass laws on the local level requiring smoke-free workplaces.

That is why I am very concerned to learn that the ND Legislature is considering House Bill 1152 to exempt cigar lounges and bars that sell cigars from our statewide smoke-free law. This would reverse important public health gains in our communities and open the door for additional exemptions. And it is unethical for employees to have to risk their health to earn a paycheck.

In published longitudinal studies of the impact of ND's law (<https://doi.org/10.1097/NNR.000000000000286>), my co-authors and I found immediate, substantial and sustained declines in secondhand smoke and elimination of disparities in secondhand smoke exposure in rural communities. This led to a just distribution of smoke-free laws statewide and increased protection of populations, especially in rural areas, from secondhand smoke.

As a researcher and professor of nursing at North Dakota State University and as an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) volunteer, I urge the Industry, Business and Labor Committee of the House of Representatives to consider the health of North Dakotans and vote against weakening our smoke-free law. Please contact your legislators and tell them to do the same.

*Kelly Buettner-Schmidt is a professor of nursing at North Dakota State University and a volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. Views are her own.*

*This column does not necessarily reflect the opinion of The Forum's editorial board nor Forum ownership.*