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2:00 pm CST

House Appropriations – Human Resources Division Committee for the 67<sup>th</sup> ND Legislative Assembly

Chairman Nelson, and members of the House Appropriations – Human Resources Division Committee hello, my name is Heather Austin, and I am the Executive Director for Tobacco Free North Dakota. The mission of Tobacco Free North Dakota is to improve and protect the public health of all North Dakotans by reducing the serious health and economic consequences of tobacco use, the state’s number one cause of preventable disease and death. We work to facilitate coalitions and promote policy discussions across North Dakota, along with providing education and resources that are used to help prevent kids from ever starting the dangerous addiction to tobacco and nicotine. Thank you so much for your time this afternoon.

Today I am here to encourage sustainable and sufficient funding for the State Tobacco Prevention and Control Program in SB 2004, a bill relating to Department of Health Budget and its tobacco control program.

Since the tobacco control program, with reduced funding, was restructured under the Department of Health back in 2017, TFND has been much more involved and utilized, along with other Partners and stakeholders, to accomplish the goals outlined in our State Plan for Tobacco Prevention and Control. The program has dealt remarkably well with doing the same work, or in some cases even more work, with less resources and funds. We have made great strides in what we accomplish for our citizens.

This work is highlighted in the attached synthesis report titled, “The State of Tobacco Control in North Dakota: 2019 – 2021: Innovation. Community focus. Fiscal responsibility.” A contracted evaluator, Professional Data Analysts, working on behalf of our ND Department of Health collected, analyzed, and synthesized data from the many individuals and organizations across North Dakota working to implement our State Plan. I hope the Committee finds this information helpful in seeing the value provided to our state in funding this work. It is my hope that the recommended line-item funding for tobacco prevention and control of \$13,410,241 will be approved or increased.

Also, of note, TFND is taking a lead alongside several of these same stakeholders and partners fulfilling work in our communities and schools educating and advocating for policy that would reduce e-cigarettes and vaping (ENDS) among our youth while also highlighting the dangers of these products. With the “vaping epidemic” announced by the FDA in 2018, and the COVID-19 pandemic that swept our country this past year, we know that lung health is as important as ever,

and we know that there is still more work to be done to save the newest generation from the serious health and economic consequences of a lifelong addiction to tobacco.

I cite all this to say that there is much being done for tobacco prevention and cessation policy in North Dakota, but that there is still so much to do, and I think these combined efforts and collaborations are so important to continue to support with our time, talent, and treasure. And, further, it is my belief, combined with my knowledge in tobacco prevention, that I propose that we could be accomplishing even more if we were to restore funding levels to the previous \$22.7 million allocated in the 2015-2017 biennium before the substantial reductions were put in place. Just think of the health impacts and potential for lives saved any increase in funding could provide for our state.

Along with my testimony, you are also receiving a copy of our Resolution of Support for a fully Funded Tobacco Prevention and Control Program for ND. The following organizations/entities signed TFND's resolution. (Attached):

Cavalier County Memorial Hospital, Cavalier County Board of Health, Grand Forks Tobacco Free Coalition, McKenzie County Community Coalition, ND Public Health Association, Pembina County Board of Health, Pembina County Commission, Pembina County Memorial Hospital Association, University of Mary Health PRO, Southwestern District Health Unit, Upper Missouri District Health Unit, Walsh County Tobacco Free Coalition, Williams County Community Coalition.

With continued funding, and at a minimum at least no further reductions, we can lead the way in protecting all ND citizens, and that creates healthier youth and a healthier state, and that saves lives.

Again, thank you for this time in front of you, Chairman Nelson, and the Committee. It is very appreciated. Please vote Do Pass with continued funding for Tobacco Prevention and Control included in SB 2004.

May I take any questions?

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs—2014. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.