

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 1229

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Chairman Rep. Louser, and members of the House Industry, Business, and Labor Committee. My name is Megan Schneider, I currently serve as the President of the Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition. I am also a respiratory therapist and educator. I have worked in respiratory care for nearly eight years and am here to provide testimony in opposition to HB 1229.

Ten years – 10 years, ND's smoke free law has allowed for clean air. As an RT student, I remember participating in activities at the capital in our continued advocacy of a smoke-free state. And ten years ago, the people of ND spoke as we passed our smoke-free law that allowed members and visitors of our community to enjoy their time out as they sat with their families and friends in a smoke-free public restaurant! What a beautiful thing!

The fact is, HB 1229 threatens North Dakota's Comprehensive Indoor Smoke Free Air Law. Therefore, I would ask why we would change state law for such a small population? According to North Dakota's Tobacco Surveillance data report, only 4.3% of North Dakotan adults currently smoke cigars, and 85% of ND adults don't smoke.<sup>1</sup> And so, I may also ask, whom does this serve? Is the addition of a cigar bar to a smoke-free community worth jeopardizing the lives of employees who will again be exposed to the effects of secondhand tobacco smoke from cigars?

One study from 2014 found that cigar smoking was responsible for approximately "9,000 premature deaths among adults aged 35 and older in the U.S. These deaths represented almost 140,000 years of potential life lost and a monetary loss of \$22.9 billion."<sup>2</sup> This data allows us to see the detrimental health effects and the financial losses incurred from cigar use.

The truth is, it doesn't matter if a cigar bar resides in a stand-alone building or if an individual in favor of this entity makes a somewhat promising claim of ensuring "proper ventilation," because air ventilation systems cannot effectively eliminate second-hand smoke. The only way to eliminate the health risks associated with second-hand smoke is to prohibit smoking activity.<sup>3</sup>

As we consider HB 1229, let us remember that addiction is not freedom; and that the health of the citizens of North Dakota needs to be placed at the forefront of policymaking in order to uphold the strong ethical and moral standards of our great state. The Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition urges you to vote "NO" on HB 1229. We have made great strides in our community by reducing tobacco use rates and protecting individuals from secondhand smoke. I ask the Industry, Business, and Labor Committee to vote no on HB 1229.

Thank you. This concludes my testimony. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

References:

1. <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/health/community/tobacco/surveillance-data>.
2. <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/cigars-facts-stats-and-regulations>.
3. <https://studylib.net/doc/18040133/ashrae.org--home>