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8:30 am CST

House Industry, Business and Labor Committee for the 68th ND Legislative Assembly

Chairman Louser, and members of the House Industry, Business and Labor 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. Thank you so much for your time this morning.

Today I am here to encourage a Do Pass on HB 1412, or the bill relating to the classification and licensing of electronic smoking devices.

By updating our laws to reflect our current state needs, and the new products that have joined the market in the last 25 years, we can better monitor and regulate tobacco to keep it out of the hands of our youth and to provide further support to health programs and services for ND citizens.

These unlicensed and unregulated electronic products make it easier for beginners – primarily our kids – to try the product and ultimately become addicted. HB 1412, simply aims to include electronic tobacco products for licensing and compliance check regulation, alongside other existing tobacco products in North Dakota, treating all tobacco products equally.

Early evidence is clear that it is unsafe for young people to use e-cigarettes, vapes, JUULs, or any other products containing nicotine. As stated by the Surgeon General, "E-cigarette use poses a significant – and avoidable – health risk to young people in the United States. Besides increasing the possibility of addiction and long-term harm to brain development and respiratory health, e-cigarette use is associated with the use of other tobacco products that can do even more damage to the body."i.

Parity for all tobacco products in their licensing and regulation is good step forward to leading the way in protecting our kids, and that creates healthier youth and a healthier state. HB 1412 will help us do that.

Again, thank you for this time in front of you, Chairman Louser, and the Committee. It is very appreciated. Please vote Do Pass on HB 1412.

May I take any questions?

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i. HHS, Know the Risks: E-Cigarettes & Young People, accessed March 15, 2018 at <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/knowtherisks.html>.