

Good afternoon Chairman Larsen and members of the Senate Industry and Business Committee, my name is Nevaeh Mock, I am a Junior at Legacy High School and two year member of the Bismarck Break Free Youth Board. Our youth board fights every day to bring awareness towards tobacco use in our community and what detrimental effects it holds over us as a society. I stand before you today in opposition of House Bill 1229. Many have voiced their concerns towards cigar lounges but I have come today to offer a youth's perspective on House Bill 1229 and how an adult decision can affect the lives of the youth across North Dakota.

It has been argued that a cigar lounge offers a relaxing and tranquil environment for cigar smokers in which they can release stress and feel as if they are in a non-judgmental space, surrounded by other civilians participating in the same activity. Cigars are thought to release this stress because as you draw on a cigar, your breath gradually starts to slow - also slowing your heart rate. While the external effects of cigars seem to relieve, your body is fighting a war internally - against itself. It is no secret that within months, tobacco can cause cancers of the mouth, esophagus, lungs, cervix, and more than 12 other forms of cancer. But, what has failed to be seen by the public eye are the immediate effects these cigar bars will encourage. Second number one; you draw the cigar to your mouth. Second number three: you inhale the cigar. Second ten; the body starts to feel the so-called "buzz" which is known to give the relaxing effect. By second thirteen, the nicotine has entered the brain where it will work to fight against synapses, affecting mood and permanently lowering impulse control. If the nicotine succeeds to completely attack and destroy the synapse, neurodegenerative diseases become the new normal to a smokers life. These diseases and risk factors are nothing new to you. I know that you are aware of the what-if's, but just like many of us, you think that this would never happen to you. It is just another story on the news, but surely this will not be me. I ask that you think again.

Picture a family member. Maybe you are a father to a beautiful teenage daughter, or an aunt to a wild-spirited niece. Please picture them as I tell the following story. They grew up in a household where their parents would spend every Friday night at the cigar lounge, relieving any stress the work week brought into their everyday lives. As this quickly became a new normal routine in the child's life, they believed that it was okay to partake in. At sixteen years old, she started smoking. It started off as a fun activity she would do to get away from life every once in a while. Three months in and she became a daily smoker and by the time she turned 21, she was going to cigar bars every night. It was a new environment for her. She didn't feel like she was being looked at weird by the people around her like she was judged at school because here, she was one of them. The cigar bar was her new hang-out spot as she had never felt more welcomed into an environment. But she went home every night feeling completely empty. The toxic chemicals in nicotine had affected her brain wiring. She suffered from depression and extreme mood declines. The friends around her were no longer the people she went to when she needed someone to talk to because they had been replaced by a stick of tobacco. And she now believed that the only place she could go to where she would feel safe was the cigar lounge, where she was surrounded by people encouraging her to smoke. Flash forward 30 years and she has a family. Yes, she found a way to cope with the depression and mood swings because it was all her body was used to. Except now, she had a baseball sized tumor attached to the lining of her lungs. She was not a what-if of this story. The family member you are thinking about during this story was my grandma. She died at age 64 from smoking induced lung cancer. She believed that because of the generations before her, she was making the right decision to smoke. She looked up to them at just fifteen years old. I had to find out how to live a life without my best friend. I was not a what-if of this story.

When will it end? When will we stop being so selfish and realize that what we do now is what our grandchildren see and will come to know as an acceptable decision. I will not see another generation fall to tobacco use. I understand that some of you may not be tobacco users. I also understand that even as non-tobacco users, you believe that every human deserves the right to choose for themselves. I am not standing here today to preach to you the effects cigar bars have on one person. I stand here today to remind you that *we are the next generation*. We look up to *you*. And by voting for cigar bars - by encouraging dedicated spaces to partake in smoking, you are not only voting for your generation of adults, but my generation, and your four year old grandson's generation. Think of them. Think of how you want them to live. Rather than seeing the Smoke-Free Law as preventing someone's choice, we need to start seeing it as giving people the choice to live and a pathway for generations to come.

I ask you to oppose this bill as you think of the youth in North Dakota. For you to consider the safety and well-being of you, your children, and your grandchildren to come. We want the opportunity to be the generation that ended tobacco related deaths. Thank you. I am now open for questions.