

I am urging you to vote no on HB 1229 – the “Cigar Bar” Bill. In a time when we have a mental health and addiction crisis, I find it hard to understand why we would promote another addiction – that to nicotine. Nicotine has been found to prime the brain for other addictions.

In my position as a public health nurse, I educate students on the dangers of nicotine/vaping/smoking, etc. Research shows that exposure to nicotine is damaging to the developing brain, leading to problems with learning, memory, and mood to name a few. Last year I had a third-grade girl tell me that she tried a vape and liked it. Students as young as 4<sup>th</sup> grade admit that they are being offered vapes. Plus, these students are aware of kids in their classes who have/are vaping. High school students estimate use among their peers is as high as 65-75%. Any bill that promotes nicotine use sends a message to kids that nicotine use is okay. We need to be better role models than that.

Lastly, ten years ago, the citizens of North Dakota made their decision, by voting for a strong smoke free law that protects all workers from secondhand smoke. As I visit with people across the state, most are surprised to hear about the Cigar Bar Bill. And, they are very concerned to hear that there might be changes to our current smoke free law, a law which they still they strongly support. I hear many comments that changing the law would be a big step backwards for our state. It does not make sense that we would change a great law to carve out a special niche for cigar smokers, who only make up 4.3% of our population.

Please vote no on HB 1229. Thank you for your consideration of my request and your service to North Dakota.

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