

**Senate Industry & Business**

**Chairman – Senator Doug Larsen – District 34**

**March 1, 2023**

**Testimony By: Shaun Sipma**

**Shaun Sipma – Resident of Minot, ND**

**shaun.sipma@outlook.com**

**701-721-6839**

**HB1229**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in favor of House Bill 1229.

The proposed legislation is regarded as a return of a freedom of choice that was stripped away from business owners and prospective business owners by an initiated measure more than a decade ago.

The issue of Cigar Lounges comes down to a simple matter of choice by both the business owner and patrons. Those who don't want to be exposed to first hand or second hand cigar smoke simply don't have to patronize that business. The concerns that have been expressed by the anti-smoking coalition for employees of a Cigar Lounge is a moot argument as the availability of employment across the state gives everyone the ability to work in an environment of their choosing. Simply, if an individual doesn't want to be in a Cigar Lounge work environment then they don't have to work at that establishment. Again, it is a matter of choice.

North Dakota has been working hard to build its reputation as a busy friendly state. The current law in place with its restrictions is counter to that effort. While this industry would be small it would also provide additional tax revenue to the state and local municipalities. It is reasonable to state that sales of on-line cigars would also be reduced as patrons visiting a cigar lounge in North Dakota would be more likely to support a local business rather than an out-of-state entity.

For members of this committee who may have an unfavorable view of cigar smoking, I would ask you to consider what else you have an unfavorable view of? Is it prudent to prohibit something because you don't like it regardless of whether

you, or anyone else who doesn't like it, would ever be exposed to it? No it is not prudent to do so.

Cigar smoking will take place regardless of the outcome of this legislation. Those arguing against this bill on merits of health are disregarding that fact. The fact that is important to this committee and to those voting on this legislation is whether North Dakota wants to be a business friendly state and capture the business dollars that currently are going out of state.

I would strongly urge you to vote yes on House Bill 1229 as it outlines substantial limits within the legislation while returning one important aspect to business owners and residents. Freedom of choice! The pendulum has swung entirely too far with the collective social health initiatives which is quickly eroding away freedoms and leading down an even more dangerous road whether it's cigars, vaccines or any other area deemed necessary for the collective good. It's now time to make a prudent correction.

I greatly appreciate your time in reading this testimony and your consideration.  
Respectfully, Shaun Sipma, Resident of Minot.