

## TESTIMONY IN OPPOSITION OF HB 1229

Megan Schneider  
Bismarck, ND  
701-220-5414  
mleighsrrt@gmail.com

Chairman Larsen and Senate Industry and Business Committee members. My name is Megan Schneider; I currently serve as the President of the Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition. I am also a respiratory therapist, educator, and Tobacco Treatment Specialist. 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 a respiratory therapy 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.

The fact is HB 1229 threatens North Dakota's Comprehensive Indoor Smoke Free Air Law. I would like to call your attention to the opening lines of this policy as it is currently written, "In order to protect the public health and welfare and to recognize the need for individuals to breathe smoke-free air, smoking is prohibited in all enclosed areas of: a. Public places; and b. Places of employment." <sup>1</sup> And so, I ask, will once again allowing secondhand smoke in a public cigar bar or lounge maintain this very important aspect of our smoke free air law?

As an important reminder – cigars are not a safe alternative to cigarettes.<sup>2,3</sup> According to Mayo Clinic, Secondhand smoke from cigars contains the same toxic chemicals as secondhand cigarette smoke; this type of smoke can cause or contribute to lung cancer and heart disease.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, 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>4</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 secondhand smoke. The only way to eliminate the health risks associated with secondhand smoke is to prohibit smoking activity in public spaces.<sup>5</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 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 Senate Industry and Business 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.ndlegis.gov/assembly/68-2023/regular/documents/23-0331-01000.pdf>
2. <https://www.lung.org/quit-smoking/smoking-facts/health-effects/cigars>
3. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/quit-smoking/expert-answers/cigar-smoking/faq-20057787#:~:text=Secondhand%20smoke%20from%20cigars%20contains,lower%20respiratory%20infections%20in%20children>
4. <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/cigars-facts-stats-and-regulations>.
5. <https://studylib.net/doc/18040133/ashrae.org--home>