



**House Finance and Taxation Committee
HB 1570
February 12, 2025
Representative Craig Headland, Chair**

Summary:

- The City of Bismarck **strongly supports** relating to increasing the price of all tobacco products including electronic smoking devices.

Testimony:

Chairman Headland and Members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee:

On behalf of the City of Bismarck, my name is Susan Kahler, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator with Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health. Today, I offer testimony in **strong support of HB1570**.

The City of Bismarck's Tobacco Prevention Program follows the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Best Practices, which emphasize comprehensive strategies to reduce tobacco use. One major component is increasing the price of all tobacco products, including electronic smoking devices, to reduce tobacco use rates for everyone, especially among youth. This approach is backed by extensive research, including the 2020 U.S. Surgeon General's Report on Smoking Cessation.

As a Mayo Clinic Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist, I have spent several years assisting individuals in North Dakota in quitting tobacco use. I want to share why raising the price of tobacco products would significantly benefit the health of our community.

In my work, I've encountered many young adults who started vaping as teenagers and have since struggled with nicotine addiction. One individual I worked with began vaping at age 13 and later experienced significant respiratory issues, particularly when exercising. Despite multiple attempts to quit, their addiction was deeply tied to stress, depression, and social influences.

One of the things I've seen time and time again is that the financial cost of vaping is often an overlooked barrier to quitting. My client didn't realize he was spending over \$200 per month on vape products until we discussed it. This financial strain only added to his stress, making it harder for him to break free from his addiction. The low cost of vape products allowed him to justify continuing his habit, despite the toll it was taking on his health.

Increasing tobacco prices in North Dakota would serve as a strong deterrent, particularly for young people who are vulnerable to addiction. Higher prices would make it harder for individuals to justify continuing their habit and could serve as a wake-up call, encouraging them to confront the damage it's doing to both their health and their finances.

The City of Bismarck strongly supports HB 1570 as it would improve public health outcomes by increasing the price of tobacco products and establishing a dedicated fund for behavioral health services to address the mental health challenges, including anxiety and depression, associated with tobacco addiction. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Susan Kahler, Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator, City of Bismarck
skahler@bismarcknd.gov | 701.355.1597

