

Chairman Representative Headland and members of the Finance and Taxation Committee, my name is Ben Guthmiller. I am a senior at Legacy High School and President of Stop the Cloud, a student-led organization dedicated to commercial tobacco and e-cigarette prevention. I am here to provide testimony and support for House Bill 1570.

It has become too common for students in schools throughout the state to access and become addicted to commercial tobacco and e-cigarette products. Some of my closest classmates and companions have fallen into addiction and dependency to the point they must bring these products everywhere they go, including school, to function throughout the day. Not only does the constant use of these devices harm my peers by the chemicals found within the devices themselves, but I have personally witnessed and heard testimony from others that these devices have encouraged my peers to experiment with stronger drugs. I worry deeply about the future of my peers due to the number of adolescents who use these products.

Recognizing the detrimental effects of youth use of tobacco and e-cigarette products, Legacy High School's Stop the Cloud organization was formed. The organization is exclusive to Legacy High School, but the club works to provide all youth with education on tobacco and e-cigarettes while offering tools to quit. In our school, we have conducted engaging events that raise awareness of the harms and implications of youth tobacco and e-cigarette use, and we have seen results with students approaching us expressing their worries and wanting to quit. Yet, many students do not heed the dangers that come with the use of these products which we communicate. We advocate on many levels in our school and in the community to persuade our classmates, and those even younger than us in middle or elementary school, that tobacco and e-cigarette products could harm their bodies, disrupt their learning, and hinder their path to future success; nevertheless, we recognize that legislative changes are necessary to assist in preventing the youth from using these products.

With that being said, as President of Stop the Cloud, I represent the group in saying that we believe that House Bill 1570 and an increased tobacco product tax is a step in positive change to protect the youth in our community. This bill would positively impact adults and notably the youth who struggle every day from the addiction and detrimental effects of tobacco and e-cigarette dependence. House Bill 1570 will not immediately bring an end to youth nicotine addiction, but it is one step towards a goal that will continue to be advocated for.

Please support HB1570 for the youth in the community who struggle with addiction and the physical, mental, and emotional harm that tobacco and e-cigarette products bring. As advocates, we have made progress in reducing tobacco and e-cigarette use rates, and we as youth ask for your aid in guiding our classmates for the future of our generation. I ask the Finance and Taxation Committee to vote Yes on HB 1570.