

Moorea Knapp

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February 12th, 2025

Testimony prepared on HB 1570 for Chairman Headland and the Finance and Taxation committee

Chairman Headland, and members of the Finance and Taxation committee, hello, my name is Moorea Knapp. I am currently a senior at Century High School, and will soon be a freshman at the University of Alabama. I am also a two year member of the Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Break Free Youth Board (BFYB). As a student-led board, BFYB's mission is to advocate against e-cigarette use in our communities. We fight for community awareness of the true dangers that nicotine use presents to our generation. As a matter of fact, tobacco use is North Dakota's number one cause of preventable disease and death. I would like to thank you for your time today, as I stand before you to advocate for HB 1570, with a Do Pass stance. This bill will raise the tax rates on all tobacco products, including e-cigarettes.

As a BFYB member, I often present to fifth grade students in our Bismarck community. When starting a presentation, I ask students to raise their hands if they have seen an e-cigarette in their homes, at school, in an advertisement, or if they know someone who uses these products. Without fail, every hand in the room is raised, including my own. E-cigarettes have had a tremendous impact on my generation, and it is discouraging to see that their influence has begun to bleed into the next generation. When it comes to lowering the use of these devastating products, the Center for Disease Control and National Institutes of Health recommend instituting a three-legged stool approach, as it is one of the most effective paths to lowering tobacco product usage among adults and teens alike. The reason I am here to testify on behalf of this bill today is because it embodies one of the three legs of prevention: increased tobacco taxes.

It has also been proven that with these increased prices comes lower vaping and product usage rates. This is supported by the Truth Initiative, which as an organization cites that price increases reduce underage e-cigarette and smoking rates by at least 9.3%, which is an even greater positive effect. As a youth voice advocating for this change, I can say that these statistics alone give me great hope for the change that can be brought by the passage of this bill. From my own perspective, I readily believe that by increasing our state tobacco tax, for the first time since 1993, we can generate state income and significantly lower tobacco use. This is not a radical tax increase. It is not unacceptable or detrimental by any means to those who profit from tobacco sales. It brings us to par with our South Dakota neighbors, and establishes that we, as North Dakotans, are prioritizing our health, the health of our environment, and the health of our children, and their children to come.

As of today, tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death in North Dakota. As a part of a most sincere effort to change this, I encourage you all to vote Do Pass on HB 1570. Again, thank you all for your time and attention, Chairman Headland, and the committee. I honestly appreciate it. I can now accept any questions.