

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1570

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Chairman Rep. Headland, and members of the Finance and Taxation Committee. My name is Kayla Tiffany, vice president of Stop the Cloud, Legacy High School tobacco prevention club. I am here to provide testimony in support of House Bill 1570.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, my grandmother was diagnosed with lymphoma cancer and COPD; she was put on hospice care in her home. She was a smoker all her life. We spent months traveling back and forth from Bismarck and Montana to help my grandfather take care of her. After a few months, my grandfather was diagnosed with throat cancer, caused by smoking cigars and cigarettes for most of his life. He was told he would have to have throat surgery to remove his voicebox. Since he could not take care of my grandmother during his recovery time, my parents decided to move her into our home. She was in our house for 3 weeks before she died in a hospital bed in our living room. After my grandpa's surgery, he continued cancer treatments until he rang the bell and was cancer-free. Unfortunately, less than 5 months later, the cancer was back. There was nothing the doctors could do for him. He was put on hospice care in my home. His throat was eaten away by cancer and you could see right into his throat. After a few months, he died in my living room, in the same place and way his wife had.

After experiencing this, I decided to become an advocate for tobacco-free lifestyles. I am now vice president of Stop the Cloud, the tobacco prevention group at Legacy High School here in Bismarck.

Students need to be involved in groups like Stop the Cloud because it allows them to become involved in a place where they spend 5 out of 7 days of their week for 12 years. Around 50% of the time I walk into a bathroom at school, I can smell the secondhand smoke of an e-cigarette. We have had bathrooms shut down in our school to try to prevent this but it has only pushed them into the bathrooms that cannot be closed.

If the tax on tobacco products is raised, it would make people, especially the younger generation, think twice about buying tobacco products. It would help people throughout North Dakota start living a tobacco-free life, a life where they save money and stay healthy.

Please support HB 1570 because the rise of the tobacco tax will help protect our future generations. We have made great strides in our community by reducing tobacco use rates and protecting individuals from secondhand smoke. I ask the Finance and Taxation Committee to vote Yes on HB 1570. Thank you. This concludes my testimony.