

WRITTEN TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1570

Prepared for the House Finance and Taxation Committee

Hearing Date: February 12, 2025

Committee Chairman Representative Headland and members of the House Finance and Taxation Committee. My name is Joan Enderle, Chair of the North Dakota Advocacy and Engagement Committee, American Heart Association. I am submitting written testimony to request your support for House Bill 1570, which aims to elevate the tax on commercial tobacco and establish equal taxation across all tobacco products.

Excise taxes are effective in reducing smoking. And will raise revenue! With North Dakota's cigarette tax at only \$0.44 per pack (49th in the country), much lower than the national average of \$1.97, and unchanged since 1993, this bill is a vital step to reduce smoking rates.

My primary objective is to protect our youth from nicotine addiction and the habit of using commercial tobacco products. Since the majority of adult smokers begin their habit before turning 18, implementing tobacco taxes is a proven method to deter young people and young adults from starting.

As a healthcare provider working in a community hospital for 24 years, I saw the negative impacts of tobacco use/addiction including heart disease, cancer and lung disease. Tremendous medical costs and lives lost.

House Bill 1570 is a triple win for the citizens of North Dakota – Reduction in youth tobacco/vaping, increased revenue and will reduced healthcare costs.

It's crucial that we take stronger measures to safeguard our youth, and HB 1570 is a step in that vital direction. I strongly encourage your support!

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