

Chairman Larsen, and members of the Industry and Business Committee. My name is Kameron Hymer, and I reside in Williams County with my family.

I am asking that you support House Bill No. 1229, a bill for an act to amend and reenact section 23-12-10 of the North Dakota Century Code, relating to cigar bars and cigar lounges.

This bill will allow for the use of an already legal product in a lounge setting. A cigar lounge would be an enjoyable, warm and relaxing atmosphere to visit with friends who also enjoy cigars.

Governor Burgum recently said, *“North Dakota takes pride in being one of the most business-friendly states in the nation, and we continuously seek new ways to support entrepreneurs, innovators and emerging and expanding businesses”*. Working in local government myself, I recognize the value and importance of economic diversity and agree with Governor Burgum that we need to support new and existing businesses.

Blanket claims from those that oppose this bill don't hold true or tell the complete truth. Such as:

Claim 1: *“We don't want to be exposed to secondhand smoke in public spaces”*.

Response: This bill would only allow cigars to be smoked in a dedicated establishment for that purpose. This bill would not allow someone to smoke a cigar in bars such as, River's Edge, Cattails, Buffalo Wild Wings, etc. Those not wanting to be exposed to secondhand smoke would not be unless they deliberately entered the establishment.

Claim 2: *“Cigar use among youth is now almost as common as cigarette smoking!”*

Response: The March 2022 FDA-Funded study, Premium Cigars: Patterns of Use, Marketing and Health Effects, from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine states, *“The PATH analysis focused on adults because premium cigar use is very limited in youth.”* and *“Premium cigar use is less common among youth, and only 0.6 percent of those who reported smoking a premium cigar brand in the past 30 days were under the age of 18”*. Incorrect statistics grouping cheap “gas station” cigarillos like Black & Milds, to premium 100% tobacco cigars as being the same product are misleading. HB 1229 clearly explains the definition of a cigar; it is not the same product that has seen an increase in youth usage.

Opposing parties are also protesting this bill because of the health risks to the user. If that is truly a concern, why is alcohol consumption not being protested? It comes with major health risks as well. Even social media pages from groups in opposition of HB 1229 show their members partaking in alcohol at dinners and banquets.

“Government exists to protect us from each other. Where government has gone beyond its limits is in deciding to protect us from ourselves.” – Ronald Reagan

In conclusion, I urge you cast a YES vote for HB 1229.

Sincerely,

Kameron Hymer