



March 23, 2021

Dear Chair Liebling and Committee members:

I am writing on behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA) to express our support of HF 2128, a bill that includes an investment of \$8 million a year for tobacco prevention and treatment. As the nation's oldest and largest organization dedicated to fighting heart disease and stroke, the AHA represents more than 100 million patients with cardiovascular disease (CVD). Tobacco use is a leading cause of CVD and is responsible for one out of four CVD deaths.

We would like to thank Governor Walz and Lt. Governor Flanagan for including prevention measures in their revised state budget proposal that dedicates \$8 million on a year in prevention and treatment. By investing in proven prevention and treatment strategies, adults will be able to get the help they need to quit, and youth can avoid addiction before it starts. While the AHA supports the proposal, the language and funding levels included in Representative Morrison's bills is preferred, (HF 1410/HF 569) dedicating \$15 million a year to tobacco prevention and treatment programs.

The state of Minnesota collected nearly \$760 million in tobacco taxes and settlement fees last year but spent just 1 percent of that on prevention and treatment. Minnesota could reduce health care costs and improve health outcomes by dedicating \$15M to prevention and cessation programs.

During the present times of combatting COVID-19, an infection that aggressively attacks the lungs, those who smoke and develop COVID-19 are at increased risk of severe illness. Sustained investment in these vital public health programs over the long term will prevent thousands of illnesses and deaths from tobacco use and save billions of dollars in medical expenses in the state of Minnesota.

We need to continue to do everything we can to protect the health of our young people and prevent another generation from becoming lifelong tobacco users. The AHA urges you to help prevent tobacco use among youth, reduce the health care burden of tobacco use, and improve the health of Minnesota residents by dedicating revenue for vital tobacco prevention and cessation programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jess Nolan", written over a horizontal line.

Jess Nolan
Government Relations Director
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