



March 10, 2021

Minnesota House Preventive Health Policy Division

Chair Freiberg and Committee Members:

The American Lung Association is the leading organization working to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease through education, advocacy, and research. The work of the American Lung Association is focused on four strategic imperatives: to defeat lung cancer; to champion clean air for all; to improve the quality of life for those with lung disease and their families; and to create a tobacco-free future. I am writing in support of HF1721, which includes comprehensive tobacco tax changes along with funding for prevention and treatment. A tobacco price increase along with ending the tax break on premium cigars, tax e-cigarette devices as tobacco products and conform to federal e-cigarette online sales rules would all help to keep pace with the tobacco industry.

Increasing tobacco taxes saves lives, reduces health care costs and generates revenue. In fact, it is one of the most effective ways to prevent youth from starting to use tobacco and encourage those already addicted and desperately trying to quit.

Increasing funding in tobacco prevention and treatment is needed to address Minnesota's adult smoking rates which have leveled off and also address the youth tobacco epidemic related to vaping. Just this month the Minnesota Department of Health released the 2020 Minnesota Youth Tobacco Survey finding one in five high school students used e-cigarettes within the past 30 days, and 70 percent of youth e-cigarette users reported signs of dependence.

ClearWay Minnesota will sunset at the end of this year, leaving a major gap in prevention resources across the state. Last year only 1 percent of the \$760 million in tobacco revenue collected in Minnesota was spent on tobacco prevention and treatment. This year as we struggled across the state to address the COVID-19 pandemic, hopefully one positive lesson learned is the need for strong tobacco prevention and treatment programs and address the disparities of communities targeted for decades by Big Tobacco.

Increasing tobacco taxes is a "hat trick" for Minnesota. It will raise revenue while reducing health care costs and improving health. The American Lung Association strongly encourages you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

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