

April 6, 2018



Dear Chair Dean and Committee Members:

We write on behalf of Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation, a coalition of nearly 60 Minnesota organizations that share a common goal of saving Minnesota youth from a lifetime of tobacco addiction. We support policies that will reduce youth smoking and end tobacco's harm for good.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation supports **HF 3291**, which provides dedicated funding for tobacco cessation services, because quit-tobacco services save lives and money. Cessation services help people quit tobacco and can include phone counseling, medications such as patch, gum and lozenge, supportive email and text messages, and self-help materials. These services are cost-effective and necessary to help addicted Minnesotans to quit tobacco.

The time for action is now. QUITPLAN® Services, free tobacco cessation services currently available to all Minnesotans, will end in March of 2020. The QUITPLAN Helpline is a free, statewide service. If the Legislature does not act to fund cessation, Minnesota will become the only state not to provide these services.

Even though we have come a long way to reduce smoking rates in Minnesota, tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease. Each year, tobacco costs Minnesota dearly – adding \$7 billion a year in health care and productivity costs, and killing more than 6,300 residents. Tobacco-related costs weigh down every business, family and resident in our state.

Fortunately, investing in tobacco cessation is highly cost-effective and leads to successful quitting. For every dollar Minnesota invests in counseling and nicotine replacement therapy, \$1.29 would be saved annually. A person's chances of successfully quitting tobacco are more than tripled with counseling and medication support. We should not leave Minnesota's 580,000 addicted tobacco users without access to quitting help.

In 2017, Minnesota collected \$168 million in tobacco settlement funds and none of that funding was dedicated to tobacco cessation. Dedicating a fraction of tobacco settlement funds toward quit-smoking services is a common-sense way to ensure that every Minnesotan who wants help quitting can get it.

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation urges the committee to support this bill because investing in tobacco cessation is the first step toward reducing the harms of tobacco in our state.

Sincerely,

Molly Moilanen
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a
Smoke-Free Generation
Director of Public Affairs, ClearWay MinnesotaSM

Janelle Waldock
Co-Chair, Minnesotans for a
Smoke-Free Generation
Vice President of Community Health and
Health Equity, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of
Minnesota

Please see reverse for more information on Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation.



About Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation

Minnesotans for a Smoke-Free Generation supports policies that reduce youth smoking and help end the death and disease associated with tobacco use, including raising the tobacco age to 21, limiting youth access to menthol-, candy- and fruit- flavored tobacco, keeping tobacco prices high and funding future tobacco prevention and cessation efforts.

Partners include: A Healthier Southwest, African American Leadership Forum, Allina Health, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, Medica, American Lung Association in Minnesota, Apple Tree Dental, Association for Nonsmokers – Minnesota, Aurora/St. Anthony Neighborhood Corporation, Becker County Energize, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, CentraCare Health, Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota, ClearWay MinnesotaSM, Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio – CLUES, Dodge County Public Health, Essentia Health, Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare, HealthEast, Perham Health, HealthPartners, Hennepin County Medical Center, Hope Dental Clinic, Horizon Public Health, Indigenous Peoples Task Force, ISAIAH, LAAMPP Alumni, Lake Region Healthcare, Lincoln Park Children and Families Collaborative, Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, March of Dimes, Mayo Clinic, Minnesota Academy of Family Physicians, Minnesota Cancer Alliance, Minnesota Council of Health Plans, Minnesota Hospital Association, Minnesota Medical Association, Minnesota Nurses Association, Minnesota Oral Health Coalition, Minnesota Public Health Association, MN Association of Community Health Centers, MN Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Model Cities of St. Paul, Inc., NAMI Minnesota, North Memorial Health Care, NorthPoint Health and Wellness Center, Olmsted Medical Center, PartnerSHIP 4 Health, Rainbow Health Initiative, SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, Steele County Public Health, Tobacco Free Alliance, Twin Cities Medical Society, UCare, Vision In Living Life "Change is Possible", WellShare International and Zumbro Valley Medical Society.

Find out more at: smokefreegenmn.org.