Preventative Health Committee members,

For nearly 100 years, the American Heart Association has grown into an organization of more than 33 million volunteers and supporters dedicated to improving heart health and reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke. We support HF 3153 that will help improve access to cessation services for Medicaid Patients in Minnesota. In this time of COVID recovery, it is important we make steps to improve access to care. With smoking identified as a risk factor for severe coronavirus-related disease and death, it is more urgent than ever to help people quit.

Tobacco use takes a devastating toll on the state – killing nearly 6000 Minnesotans every year and costing the state 2.5 billion in health care costs – much of it borne by taxpayers. It is a problem that starts with our children because nearly 90 percent of current smokers begin when they are 18 or younger.

Medicaid enrollees smoke at rates over twice as high as their counterparts with private health insurance. Minnesota, like other states that have expanded Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, has experienced substantial increases in the number of smokers that are quitting. Improving access to these critical services saves lives and saves the state money.

This legislation also eliminates Cost-sharing for drugs used for tobacco and nicotine cessation or tobacco and nicotine cessation services. This will help many Medicaid patients be able to access these products and services without worrying about cost and just focusing on their treatment of their addition. This is critical for cessation programs to effectively help patients quit.

Policymakers are in a unique position on this issue. We know the problem caused by tobacco. We know that comprehensive prevention and cessation programs are a critical part of the solution. This legislation will be a big step forward to improve access to cessation services and in this time recovery, moving this legislation is important to the health of Minnesotans

Thank you in advance for your support,

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Stacy Frelund

American Heart Association

Regional Team Lead (MN, IA, WI)