



February 17, 2021

Chair Rep. Paul Marquart and Members  
Tax Committee  
Minnesota Legislature

Chair Marquart and Members of the Committee:

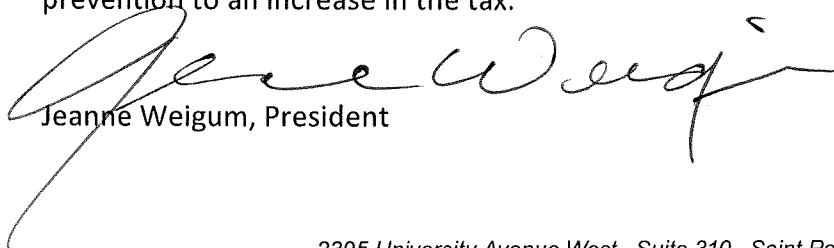
We write in support of the tobacco tax increases in HF991.

The Association for Nonsmokers - MN writes in support of HF 991, *the COVID-19; recovery budget revenue raising proposed for strategic investments in economy, working family support, and combating youth smoking and nicotine addiction*. HF 991 will help protect youth and ultimately adults from the addiction and health harms caused by tobacco use, but in one significant area it does not go far enough. Money must be dedicated to tobacco use prevention.

ANSR is the oldest organization in Minnesota solely dedicated to preventing the harms caused by tobacco. We have supported policies at the state and local level since 1975, beginning with the Minnesota Clean Indoor Air Act and through last year's adoption of the Tobacco 21 law. We led the initiative to pass the Omnibus Nonsmoking and Disease Prevention Act of 1985. With that law Minnesota became the first state in the nation to dedicated tobacco tax dollars to tobacco prevention. Shockingly, that dedication was less than a penny of a \$.05 tax increase. Pathetic as it seems today to dedicate less than a penny of the tobacco tax to prevention, it still is the largest tax dedication Minnesota law makers have ever made to tobacco prevention.

As with many products, price is one of the most powerful incentives to either use or not use it. Increasing the cost of tobacco to begin to approximate the actual cost of tobacco on society makes good health and good tax policy. Dedicating revenue to prevention makes it even better policy.

Minnesota brings in close to \$760,000,000 from tobacco settlement payments and taxes yet invests only about six million to prevent tobacco use and help adult smokers to quit. This is unfair to the tobacco users who should receive more benefit for their taxes and it fails to invest in protecting our youth. It is the right time and appropriate to tie increased funding for prevention to an increase in the tax.



Jeanne Weigum, President