



May 5, 2021

Taxes Conference Committee

Re: HF991 (Omnibus Tax Bill)

I am writing in support of two tobacco related provisions in HF991: the provision to fund tobacco prevention and the provision to tax tobacco related devices.

The Association for Nonsmokers - MN, ANSR, is the oldest organization in Minnesota dedicated to reducing the harms done by tobacco. We have seen funding for prevention come and go even though the best progress is made when there is consistent funding and the public health community doesn't have to rely on garage sales to compete with the tobacco industry.

ClearWay Minnesota, with money from the tobacco lawsuit, has funded the majority of the tobacco prevention work in the state for the last 20 years. They are sunsetting, going away for good. BUT, the tobacco industry is not. The industry continues to spend vast amounts of money to make their products appealing to youth and to make sure their existing customers stick with them for life, however long or short that might be.

The state brings in \$760,000,000 annually in tobacco taxes and tobacco settlement revenues. The House version of the tax bill makes a long-term commitment to tobacco prevention by budgeting \$15 million annually for prevention. I hope you will support this strong public health position. It is not very effective to under-fund or provide only short term funding for a very costly and long term problem.

We have come so far in the last two decades. Think back to smoking, not in just work sites and bars and restaurants, but in the Capitol itself. Think back to a time when youth could purchase tobacco at the store with a note from 'mom.' We have accomplished so much, but there is more to do, a fact dramatically demonstrated by the youth uptake of vape products.

We urge your support for increasing the tax on tobacco related devices and fully funding tobacco prevention, not just for one year but for the long haul.



Jeanne Weigum
President