



House Finance and Taxation Committee
HB 1403
February 9, 2021

Chairman Headland and Committee Members, I am Courtney Koebele and I serve as Executive Director for the North Dakota Medical Association. The North Dakota Medical Association is the professional membership organization for North Dakota physicians, residents, and medical students.

The North Dakota Medical Association is in support of HB 1403, increasing the state's cigarette tax. At its 2013 annual meeting, NDMA adopted a resolution supporting legislative action to raise North Dakota's tobacco tax as a proven way to prevent youth tobacco initiation, encourage a reduction of adult tobacco use, reduce health care costs, and provide an overall benefit to public health.

Physicians carry the burden of trying to prevent and reduce tobacco use by counseling young patients not to start and supporting patients who have already started in their attempts to quit. Yet, they cannot do it alone. Increasing tobacco taxes is one of the leading recommendations for states to use in preventing and treating tobacco addiction.

Smoking is still the leading cause of preventable disease in the United States and North Dakota. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smoking accounts for 20 percent of all deaths. In North Dakota, roughly 1,000 people die each year from smoking related illnesses which carries with it a healthcare cost burden of \$326 million each year.

Research shows that higher prices result in increased quit attempts and decreases the number of youth who start smoking.

Increasing the cigarette tax results in a win-win situation for North Dakota by encouraging smokers to quit and preventing kids from ever starting. The ripple effect of reducing the smoking rates will be healthier people and fewer people dying of an expensive, tobacco-related disease.

NDMA supports HB 1403. I would be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.