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HB 1024

ND Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Budget

February 2, 2015

Submitted by:

Elizabeth Bonney, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator, Lake Region District Health Unit

House Appropriations Committee, Human Resources Division
Representative Chet Pollert, Chair

Good Morning Chairman Pollert and members of the House Appropriations Committee. I am Elizabeth Bonney, Tobacco Prevention Coordinator at Lake Region District Health Unit covering Benson, Ramsey, Eddy and Pierce Counties. I am testifying today in support of HB1024, which provides the appropriation for the ND Tobacco Prevention and Control Executive Committee, and I am testifying not on just a professional level but in a personal capacity as well.

I have lived through the horrible realities of what cigarette smoking can do, not just to the person who becomes physically incapacitated from the effects of smoking and nicotine but the emotional burden and heartbreak family members must go through as their loved one literally fades away before their eyes. My Mom and Dad both smoked, Dad was a Brigadier General in the United States Air Force, (pilot) obviously a very stressful job. I remember clearly stopping by his office to visit him and seeing at least two ashtrays full of cigarette butts all the time. My guess is he smoked 2-3 packs a day.

My Mom, who also smoked, told me a story once that on a regular visit to her doctor she relayed the stress she was feeling raising five children alone while my Dad was on his third tour of Vietnam. The doctor listened carefully and suggested that to help her relax it might be helpful if she took occasional cigarette breaks throughout the day.

When she was 52 years old, my Mom was diagnosed with COPD and Chronic Bronchitis, of course she didn't tell us because she knew we would worry and more importantly she knew she had to stop smoking immediately in order to stop the damage at this late stage, but she was just too addicted to face that reality. She felt she could handle that situation "somewhere down the road" and she continued to smoke. After spending several years in assisted living and then requiring around the clock nursing care we received a call from her doctor that she had taken a serious turn for the worse and we needed to make some tough decisions. On March 15th 2004, I

held my Mom's hand and said goodbye as we turned off her life support, she was only 74 years old.

My Dad's situation was a bit different, he never had COPD or heart trouble from the effects of smoking, and never presented any physical problems related to his addiction, until June 6th 1992 when I got the phone call that he had a massive stroke and it was very unlikely he would survive. But, he was a tough guy and he pulled through, however, he was never quite the same mentally, physically or emotionally.....and he continued to smoke. Two years later, he had a second massive stroke that caused paralysis to his left side and the complete loss of his swallow reflex. The physical and emotional decline after that led to his death of on January 11, 2006.

Through their illnesses, we would have open and frank conversations and I can tell you it always came back to the same two things: 1) I wish I had never started smoking, and 2) I wish I would have had the information that we know today because I would have never started. This is why my position as Tobacco Prevention Coordinator is not only my job, it is my passion.

Comprehensive Tobacco Prevention and Control Funding

Tobacco prevention efforts are critical to reduce youth and adult tobacco use rates. Without comprehensive tobacco prevention funding, tobacco use rates are at risk to escalate:

- 1) LPHU's would not be able to work within the community to help educate on the dangers of smoking and using ALL tobacco and nicotine products.
- 2) LPHU's would not be able to monitor the regulations already put in place by law North Dakota's smoke-free law.
- 3) Educating youth and adults on the dangers of smoking and tobacco would cease.
- 4) There would be no more opportunity to work with schools on passing comprehensive tobacco-free policies.

Monitoring the Industry and E-cigarettes

The tobacco industry here in the U.S. has been on the decline in recent years, but that hasn't stopped **Altria**, **Lorillard**, and **Reynolds American** from posting larger profits in recent years, and now we are facing a new front of dangers with the addition of e-cigarettes. Understanding the tobacco industry's practices is crucial for the success of tobacco control policies. In this context, it's important also to understand that tobacco products are the only legally available products that can kill up to one half of their regular users if consumed as recommended by the manufacturer. The ND Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control (the Center) continually monitor tobacco industry activities along with Tobacco Prevention Coordinators at 28 LPHUs across North Dakota.

E-cigarettes are the latest epidemic that will impact our tobacco use rates. While the outrageous debate continues about whether e-cigarettes are a safer alternative to a combustible product, one thing is for sure: consumers are curious about trying the new

products and many companies are out in force presenting the information on their terms. The three big e-cigarette companies, in an effort to replace tobacco smokers who have died due to the effects of smoking, are again targeting our youth:

- 2013 saw e-cigarette sales skyrocket to over 1 billion dollars annually and that figure is expected to double in 2014 (we are awaiting the final figures).
- The center for disease control reported on 9/6/13 that the Youth Tobacco Study found during 2011-2012, among all students in grades 6-12, e-cigarette use increased by over 50% from 3.3% to 6.8%. This rapid increase in sales figures was possible due to heavy marketing specifically directed to minors.
- Minors may be particularly vulnerable to trying e-cigarette products due to an abundance of “fun” flavors such as cherry, vanilla, pina colada and bubble gum.
- Tobacco companies continue to relay blatantly deceitful information that e-cigarettes can be used as a smoking cessation device; however, the FDA has never endorsed this claim.
- E-cigarette advertising is completely unregulated.

Comprehensive Tobacco Free School policies

Having a comprehensive tobacco-free school policy plays an important role in preventing youth initiation of tobacco use.

- It provides positive role modeling by adult employees and visitors.
- It reduces children’s observation of tobacco use and reinforces a tobacco-free social norm.
- It supports prevention messages learned in classrooms by sending clear, consistent tobacco-free messages.
- It provides a safe environment for students by eliminating exposure to secondhand smoke.
- It protects children from a dangerous drug. Tobacco use is not just a “bad habit”: it is a powerful addiction.
- And it prepares students for the reality of tobacco-free workplaces.

These policies eliminate not only cigarette use but also the other types of tobacco use on school grounds and at school events, which protects students, faculty, staff and visitors from exposure to all tobacco use including electronic smoking devices.

I had the wonderful opportunity to work with nine schools in my area who passed the ND Comprehensive Tobacco Free Policy this past fall. I was also invited to speak at two student assemblies with 7th through 12th grade students regarding the new comprehensive tobacco policy as well as tobacco prevention and education. My questions and their honest feedback told me two very important things:

1) We still have too many youth starting tobacco products who don't fully understand the full impact of the dangers of smoking and tobacco products.

2) When we work in a concerted effort with schools to get the information to our youth we can and do affect real change.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee I am pleased to say that The American Lung Association has presented an "A" grade to the state of North Dakota in the area of Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Funding. We have made great strides in educating our youth on the dangers of tobacco and smoking, we continue to monitor our communities to make certain state and local laws are understood, and we are keeping a vigilant eye on the tobacco companies to make certain existing and new products do not outpace the progress we are making in tobacco prevention.

It is imperative that funding be allocated so we can continue our mission to improve and protect the health of North Dakotans by reducing the negative health and economic consequences of the state's number-one cause of preventable disease and death --- tobacco use. Thank you for your time.