

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, hello, my name is Heather Austin and I'm the Executive Director for Tobacco Free North Dakota.

Today, I am here to offer our support for SB 2024. It is our view that continued funding of North Dakota's comprehensive tobacco prevention program delivered by BreatheND is vital to preventing North Dakota youth from developing a lifelong addiction to tobacco and nicotine.

TFND and many other organizations have all signed a formal Resolution to Support the Continuation of North Dakota's CDC-Based Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program Delivered by the North Dakota Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy (BreatheND) Through the Tobacco Prevention and Control Trust Fund.

This Resolution has been signed by: The North Dakota Society for Respiratory Care, Grand Forks Board of Health, Grand Forks Tobacco Free Coalition, American Lung Association, Bismarck Tobacco Free Coalition, Lake Region District Health, Upper Missouri District Health, Ransom County Board of Health, City-County Health District Board of Health, Nelson-Griggs District Health Unit, Towner County Safe Communities Coalition, SAFE Coalition of Fargo, Central Valley Health District, Foster County, and Tobacco Free North Dakota.

The Resolution reads as follows: WHEREAS tobacco use remains North Dakota's leading preventable cause of death, with 1,000 North Dakotans dying each year from their own smoking, and 14,000 kids under the age of 18 who now live in North Dakota are projected to die prematurely due to smoking;

WHEREAS tobacco use in North Dakota also imposes a staggering economic burden, with smoking-caused direct healthcare costs alone amounting to \$326 million each year, and each North Dakota household paying \$795 per year in "hidden" state and federal taxes for smoking-caused government expenditures;

WHEREAS the tobacco industry is continuously introducing new nicotine products and marketing them to youth through product innovations, technology, and flavorings, resulting in a high school e-cigarette use rate of 22.3%;

WHEREAS new nicotine products often circumvent existing local, state and federal laws, such as legal age of sale restrictions, advertising restrictions, smoke-free laws, and tax laws;

WHEREAS on November 4, 2008, 54% of North Dakota voters approved Initiated Measure #3 to allocate the state's Strategic Contribution Fund payment to a Best Practices tobacco prevention

program fully-funded at the CDC recommended level, and public support for this program has grown significantly to 81.7% as of 2016;

WHEREAS the establishment and success of North Dakota's Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, the nation's only fully-funded comprehensive tobacco prevention program, has contributed to a reduction in adult tobacco use from 21.9% in 2011 to 18.7% in 2015, and a reduction in youth tobacco initiation from 22.4% in 2009 to 11.7% in 2015;

WHEREAS the North Dakota Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy, in order to continue to succeed in effectively preventing youth initiation and in reducing tobacco-caused death and disease, and to respond effectively to new tobacco product introductions, operates with an independent Governor appointed committee of tobacco control policy and medical experts to insulate the program from political and tobacco-industry influence and to effectively use proven scientific approaches;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that, in keeping with North Dakota voters' establishment of and support for the North Dakota Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy and its mission of Saving Livings-Saving Money: ND's Comprehensive State Plan to Prevent and Reduce Tobacco Use, TFND supports the continuation of North Dakota's Center for Tobacco Prevention and Control Policy funded by the Tobacco Prevention and Control Trust Fund.

Thank you.

Heather Austin
Executive Director, Tobacco Free North Dakota
Cell: 701-527-2811
heather@tfnd.org
www.tfnd.org