

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 2024

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Chairman Holmberg, and members of the Senate Appropriation, Committee.

My name is Sommer Wilmeth; I am a senior at Century High School. I am speaking on behalf of the Century High School Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) students. I am here to provide testimony in support for Senate Bill 2024.

With the work of Breathe ND, local public health units, and community members of all ages since the program's implementation in 2008, the youth smoking rate has been cut in half.

This is an incredible achievement for our state. However, the tobacco industry is clever and continues to find ways to addict kids to nicotine. Their latest attempt – electronic cigarettes.

When walking from my car to school in the mornings before class, I can say on an average day I see 5 to 10 classmate's vaping in their cars. It appears the tobacco industry's slick advertising has created a persona that vaping is a cool and harmless. Personally, I have seen my peers and a very close friend fall into big tobacco's trap. Since I have turned 18 I have been asked multiple times to buy nicotine products.

Thank goodness I'm educated on the effects of these products and able to explain to how my peers are being targeted by big tobacco. I learned these skills back in October when I attended the Bismarck Tobacco Prevention Youth Summit, funded by Breathe ND. At the summit there were about 60-70 youth from area schools being trained to be a youth advocate in tobacco prevention, just like me. At the summit we learned how the tobacco industry uses slick advertising to get youth hooked.

The tobacco industry will never stop, whether it's through traditional cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or smokeless tobacco. This means that North Dakota needs to continue to take a stand against big tobacco and fund the good work being done through BreatheND.

Please support Senate Bill 2024 because by having a fully funded tobacco prevention and control program in North Dakota, based off of the centers for disease controls best practices, together we can continue to decrease youth tobacco use rates and sustain a generation free from the addiction to nicotine.