

TESTIMONY TO KEEP SB2024 FUNDED
3-8-2017

BECKY ANDERSON
PRACTICING RESPIRATORY THERAPIST
FARGO, ND
Becky.Anderson@sanfordhealth.org

Chairman Pollert and members of the House Appropriations Human Resources Division:

Good morning, I'm Becky Anderson, a registered respiratory therapist with a 37-year career serving the people of ND. As a respiratory therapist, I have been on the front lines of the tobacco epidemic for my entire career. My early professional years were marked by caring for people with chronic disease, especially those with COPD and lung cancer. Those at the end of their lives spent a considerable amount of time hospitalized. As an impressionable young therapist, I remember their names, I remember their faces, and I remember their stories. I remember the physical devastation and emotional burden which are the result of nicotine addiction. I have sat beside the bed of thousands of patients, trying to bring some small measure of comfort and light at a time many of them were at the end of their lives... dying way too young in their 50's and 60's, a few in their 70's. ***As they shared their stories with me, it always struck me as tragic that nicotine addiction is an epidemic which starts in childhood, some under ten years old, and 90% of tobacco users start before the age of 18.*** This is disturbing on many levels and significant because children are becoming addicted to nicotine when their brains are still developing. The result is that they become addicted easier and have a more difficult time quitting.

Healthcare professionals seek out evidence of "best practice" to build our care programs. This is what the ND Center for Tobacco Prevention is good at. They have impressive results. For these reasons the timing to move this program is wrong. ***Uprooting this program now will have long-term negative consequences when it comes to educating on and implementing effective tobacco prevention policy, on both the local and state levels. Policies are important because they make tobacco use less acceptable to the public, which is why kids choose to never start using tobacco, and it's what encourages current tobacco users to quit.*** These policies include tobacco-free and smoke-free parks and recreation areas, tobacco free grounds, and tobacco free schools. ***And yes, this includes educating and advocating to increase the price of tobacco.*** Without strong leadership, and the ability to stand strong for policy, we risk compromising

educational and policy efforts to the point where efforts are ineffective. For these reasons, I ask that you keep the Center funded. The Center staff and partners can get this job done the right way. ND's children deserve a better future... and it's within our grasp. This is a fight to the finish and it's within our grasp.