

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF FUNDING FOR SB 2024

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Chairman Pollert and Members of the House Appropriations, Human Resources 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 funding Senate Bill 2024.

With the work of BreatheND, local public health units, and community members of all ages since the program's implementation in 2008, resulted in cutting youth smoking rates 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 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 my peers how they are being targeted by big tobacco. I learned these skills back in October when I attended the Bismarck Tobacco Prevention Youth Summit, funded by BreatheND. At the summit there were about 60-70 youth from area schools each 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.

A successful tobacco prevention and control program is based off of the Centers for Disease Control Best Practices. The Center, along with Bismarck Burleigh Public Health and other local public health units across the state, are important partners to keep North Dakota on track to continue to reduce youth tobacco use rates. Together we can continue to decrease youth tobacco use rates and sustain a generation free from an addiction to nicotine. Please fund SB2024. Thank you.