



March 12, 2018

To: Chairman Johnson and Members of the House Taxation
From: Mary Beth Gentry, Executive Director, Young Women on the Move
Date: March 12, 2018
Re: Written testimony in support of House Bill 2231

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the proposed tax increases on cigarettes and other tobacco products in House Bill 2231.

I am writing on behalf of Young Women on the Move, a Wyandotte County nonprofit dedicated to the health, wellbeing and self-efficacy of girls and young women. Our organization is focused on helping these young women to advocate for their own health and the urgent need to improve the health of their families and community.

These young women are examining tobacco related health issues affecting their peers and families—the devastating effects of tobacco use and marketing strategies to exploit vulnerable populations, including their own. They are recognizing the dangers of second hand smoke, smoking during pregnancy and early addiction to tobacco products that lead to the county's high rates of asthma, infant mortality and cancer. One of the biggest contributors to poor health outcomes in Wyandotte County and Kansas is the use of cigarettes and other tobacco products.

We are seeing rapidly growing numbers of youth using vape products, even while in school, without realizing that the nicotine can be even more addictive and may well lead to reduced brain cognitive function, attention deficit disorder, increased risk of psychiatric disorders, and higher cigarette consumption in the future. National studies are now confirming the detrimental effects of these and other tobacco products on the still developing adolescent brain.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3543069/>

Young Women on the Move endorses a \$1.50 per pack increase in the cigarette tax with parity for OTP, at 65% of the wholesale price.

The U.S. Surgeon General, using a comprehensive review of evidence, has called raising prices on cigarettes “one of the most effective tobacco control interventions” because increasing price is proven to reduce smoking, especially among kids. Using the Tobacco Industry’s own data, the Surgeon General quotes an internal report at RJ Reynolds: “If prices were 10% higher, 12-17 incidence [youth smoking] would be 11.9% lower.”

Wyandotte County and Kansas are ready for change. **HB 2231 isn’t just a smart policy, but an absolutely necessary one that will save** lives, including this generation of youth.

For these reasons, we urge the members of the Taxation Committee to support a substantial tax increase on cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products. Thank you, again, for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Mary Beth Gentry
Executive Director
Young Women on the Move