

Dear Members of the Ohio Senate:

My name is Julie Turner from Vandalia, Ohio, and I am thrilled to tell you that I am a 45-year stage III cancer survivor. I was treated in 1975 at the Ohio State University Medical Center with an experimental cocktail of chemotherapy and radiation. As a 17-year-old who feared my life was over, I was astonished to see fellow patients on the cancer floor leave their rooms with oxygen tanks in tow. They shuffled off to the waiting room where smoking was allowed. My hospital roommate, Rose would come back to the room with a tone of blue/grey to her skin tone and gasping to breathe through her oxygen mask. I vowed because of those shocking visuals NEVER to smoke a cigarette in my life. Since that time, I have become an advocate for clean air and encouraged all around me to respect my request to refrain from or go elsewhere to smoke.

To “pay it forward” for those who funded the cancer research that which provided me with life as an adult, I began giving of my time to the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network in 2004. The first project on my volunteer agenda was to work toward Smoke Free Ohio Workplace Act. This legislation remains one of my greatest accomplishments as a volunteer.

After its passage, Ohio made significant progress in smoking rates. Tobacco master settlement funds along with state funded measures and the Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program promoted healthy outcomes in adults, children, and babies by limiting the effects of tobacco products and tobacco smoke by taking steps to lower usage rates. Unfortunately, with the funding for the Prevention and Cessation program decreasing to its current annual \$12M budget level, we have seen Ohio’s adult smoking rate rise to the 4th WORST in the U.S. Even more distressing is that 4,000 Ohio kids become daily smokers each year. The figures are even worse in minority and low-income populations. Obviously legislators, more needs to be done for the 21% of Ohio adults who currently smoke and the 20,200 who will die this year from tobacco related illness.

The importance of this program is key to lowering the financial toll of tobacco illness on all Ohioans. The program implements evidence-based practices to support three objectives: 1) discourage and prevent youth tobacco use 2) help those who are addicted to quit 3) passing local policies that limit the availability of tobacco products and exposure to secondhand smoke.

As said, most folks around me heard over the years my non-smoking lecture and fear of secondhand smoke many, many times. My daughter began hearing the speech before the age of ten and thankfully understood the horrific consequences of tobacco use. Unfortunately, her husband grew up in a smoking family and continues to use tobacco even after becoming the father of my two grandchildren. I am more than fearful that they may become part of the 36.7% of high school students who use tobacco products.

I speak for all Ohio grandmothers who are grateful for the \$2.5 million increase as proposed by Governor DeWine which would result in 700 fewer kids becoming addicted to tobacco. I am hopeful that included in that number are my sweet Abigail and baby Liam.

Sincerely,
Julie Turner
Lead Ambassador, Ohio 10th Congressional District
Vandalia, Ohio