



Written Testimony of Ken Fletcher, Director of Advocacy
American Lung Association in Ohio
In Opposition to Preemption of Local Action Over Flavored Tobacco
Ways and Means Committee
December 13, 2022

Dear Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

On behalf of the American Lung Association, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to Ohio's efforts to limit local action over flavored tobacco products. The Lung Association works on behalf of the 33 million Americans living with lung diseases including lung cancer and COPD—which are primarily caused by tobacco use and exposure to secondhand smoke.

Tobacco use remains this nation's number one preventable cause of premature death and disease, killing more than 480,000 Americans, including 20,200 Ohioans each year. The economic impact of tobacco use in Ohio is staggering. In addition to this enormous health burden, tobacco use also imposes a major economic burden on society costing Ohio \$6.56 billion in annual health costs and \$8.04 billion in lost productivity due to smoking caused related illness.

Ohio has some of the worst tobacco use rates in the country – 1 in 5 adults currently smoke cigarettes and nearly 1 in 3 (29.8%) Ohio high school students are using e-cigarettes. Flavored products are driving this epidemic. In fact, 85% of youth e-cigarette users use flavored products. Unless we take action to reduce tobacco use, 259,000 of the youth alive today in Ohio will die early from a tobacco-related disease. We must do everything we can to prevent tobacco use among young people.

Ohio has taken positive steps to improve the health of people across the state, but often the strongest, most effective tobacco control policies have originated at the local level. For example, before the state raised the age of tobacco sales to age 21, local communities led the way. Local communities continue to lead with implementing effective enforcement strategies of the law with strategies such as compliance checks with retailers and tobacco retailer licensing programs.

While the effectiveness of local control of tobacco control policies is well-documented, so is the tobacco industry's support for preemptive policies at the state level. When local residents and local leaders work together to come up with a solution, the general assembly should applaud and support our kids not big tobacco.

We appreciate the opportunity to submit this testimony. With a vision of a world free of lung disease, the American Lung Association strongly encourage the committee to choose the lives of children over Big Tobacco and vote against any proposal that would limit the ability of communities to protect the health and well-being of Ohio's children.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ken Fletcher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "K".

Ken Fletcher

Director of Advocacy

American Lung Association in Ohio

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