



5 March 2025

Dustin Holfinger
Ohio House Health Committee
HB 96 – Interested Party
American Heart Association Budget requests

Maintain Proposed Increased Funding (\$10M/year) to the Tobacco Use Prevention Fund (Line item #440656)

- Current appropriation -- \$7.5 million annually.
 - Considering population size and percentage of smokers, the CDC recommends that Ohio spend \$132 million annually on tobacco prevention programs.
 - An estimated 20,200 deaths are caused by smoking each year.
- In 2023, Ohio's adult smoking rate was 17.1%, and 36.7% of high school students used a tobacco product. Nationally, the adult smoking prevalence was 14.0%.
 - Over 2 million smokers in Ohio.
- The AHA advocates for state tobacco control program funding consistent with best practices and funding recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC's updated Best Practices document provides a blueprint for state tobacco control programs based on the latest evidence. According to the report, new research identifies strategies for states to have more impact with less cost – making it more important than ever to meet these recommended funding levels.
- Comprehensive, well-funded tobacco control programs help prevent youth from starting to use tobacco products and support and promote cessation among current tobacco users. The AHA recommends the state dedicate a portion of tobacco tax and other tobacco-related revenue for tobacco control.

Maintain Proposed Increase to Ohio's Excise Tax on Cigarettes of \$1.50/pack

- Current rate - \$1.60/pack – 29th highest in US.
 - An increase of \$1.50 would put Ohio at \$3.10/pack, placing us in the top 10.
 - An increase of at least \$1.00/pack (\$2.60/pack total) would put Ohio on par with Pennsylvania (15th highest in US)
- The last increase to this tax was in 2015. (\$.35/pack) Increases in the price of tobacco products lead to substantial reductions in tobacco use for both youth and adults.
 - Tax increases below \$1.00 are easily offset by discounts, coupons, and BOGO offers that tobacco companies use to offset the increase.

- Research shows that to lower smoking rates and change behavior, individual tobacco tax increases must be \$1.00 or more per pack. (Links to studies below)
- [State Tobacco Tax Increases: Explanations and Sources for Projections of New Revenues & Benefits](#)
- [Do cigarette prices motivate smokers to quit? New evidence from the ITC survey](#)

Maintain Tax Parity among Traditional Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (OTP)

- The AHA would ask that the legislature maintain DeWine's requested increase of OTP to 42% of wholesale price.
 - Other tobacco products are any tobacco products, other than cigarettes, which are used for smoking or chewing, or both, and snuff. This includes, but is not limited to, cigars, snuff, pipe tobacco, cigarette tobacco, blunt wraps, and chewing tobacco. Cigarette papers are not considered other tobacco products.
- Currently, "Other Tobacco Products" are taxed at 17% of wholesale price
 - The last increase to this rate was in 1993.
 - This would send a message about the dangers of these products and put them on par with the proposed traditional cigarette tax level of \$3.10/pack.

Maintain Proposed Vapor Retailer Licensing Program (Section 3701.842)

- This will assist with the enforcement of recently passed HB 258, which aims to apply the Public Nuisance Law on retailers who continually make sales to underage customers.
- This includes a \$200 application fee and a \$200 annual registration fee.
 - These funds are to be deposited into the Tobacco Use Prevention Fund.

Maintain Proposed Restriction on the Sale of Flavored Vapor Products (Section 2927.02)

- This provision would eliminate the sale of e-cigarettes that have any "characterizing flavor"
 - That definition includes menthol, chocolate, cocoa, vanilla, honey, mint, fruit, candy, dessert, alcoholic beverage, herb, or spice.
- Most youth e-cigarette users use fruit, menthol, mint, or sweet flavors.
 - 73.1% of high school e-cigarette users reported using a fruit-flavored product,
 - 55.8% of high school e-cigarette users reported using a mint-flavor,
 - 37% reported using a menthol-flavored product, and
 - 36.4% reported using candy, dessert, or sweet-flavored products.
- A government study found that 81% of kids who have ever used tobacco products started with a flavored product, including:
 - 81% who have ever tried e-cigarettes and
 - 65% who have ever tried cigars.
- Youth cite flavors as a major reason for their current use of non-cigarette tobacco products, with 81.5% of youth e-cigarette users saying they used the product "because they come in flavors I like."