



**Written Testimony in Support of Tobacco Tax Provisions in HB64  
Ohio House Finance Committee  
March 26, 2015**

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, the American Heart Association, the American Lung Association, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the tobacco tax provisions of House Bill 64.

It is hard to ignore the tobacco problem in Ohio. Our smoking rate is 23.4 percent and is the 8<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. 15 percent of our high school students smoke. Each year 12,500 kids under the age of 18 become new daily smokers. Smoking rates among our Medicaid population are over 50 percent.

We support Governor Kasich's proposal to increase the cigarette tax by \$1 per pack and to increase the tax rate on other tobacco products—like cigars, snuff, and chew—to a rate equivalent to the increased cigarette tax. We also support the proposed allocation of funding to the prevention and cessation programs at ODH and the additional tobacco free policy provisions related to our educational systems.

And, 7 out of 10 Ohio voters, across all demographics, support the Governor's proposal. A recent poll, conducted March 7-10, 2015 by the nationally recognized polling firm Public Opinion Strategies, found strong support, with 69 percent of Ohioans supporting or strongly supporting a proposal to increase the state cigarette tax by \$1.00 in order to reduce tobacco use. In addition, three-quarters of voters favor taxing other tobacco products, like cigars and chewing tobacco, at the same rate as cigarettes.

The toll of tobacco use in Ohio is great.

Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death. Smoking kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, and suicides combined. Lung cancer is the number one cancer killer for both men and women in Ohio.

Each year in Ohio, 20,200 adults die from their own smoking. Nearly 260,000 kids now under the age of 18 will die prematurely from smoking. The toll is even higher when you add in deaths from other tobacco use.

In addition to lives lost, there is also a huge financial burden from tobacco use.

Annual health care costs from smoking top \$5.6 billion. Ohio's Medicaid program spends \$1.72 billion each year to treat sick smokers. Smoking-caused productivity losses in the state are nearly \$5.9 billion.

It is estimated that each Ohio household pays \$1,098 each year in state and federal taxes for smoking-caused government expenditures.

According to the US Surgeon General, increasing tobacco taxes is one of the most effective ways – if not **the** most effective way—to reduce tobacco use. Research shows that significant and regular increases in the cigarette tax keep kids from starting to smoke and prompts adults to quit.

Please consider the savings that can be achieved just by increasing Ohio's cigarette tax by \$1.00 per pack:

- 12% drop in youth smoking resulting in 65,000 fewer youth from becoming adult smokers,
- 73,100 current adult smokers will quit smoking,
- 40,100 premature smoking-caused deaths will be prevented,
- 15,400 fewer smoking-affected pregnancies in the first five years saving \$35.8 million,
- \$11.78 million saved from fewer cases of lung cancer and \$28.26 million saved from fewer heart attacks and strokes in the first five years,
- \$15.16 million in savings for the state Medicaid program in the first five years, and
- Long-term health care costs savings of \$2.67 billion.

We cannot afford to miss this opportunity to reduce tobacco use in Ohio. By reducing our tobacco use rates and making the state healthier, the savings to the health care system will be billions of dollars and the savings to Ohio's families—priceless.

Join the 7 out of 10 Ohioans that support a \$1.00 per pack increase in the cigarette tax; the reduction of tobacco use will make Ohio more economically attractive and competitive.