

Thank you Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Ryan, and ranking member Cera for the opportunity to testify today.

Over [47,000](#) people die from accidental drug overdoses every year in the United States and most of those deaths ([33,000](#)) are from opioids, including controlled substance pain medication and illegal drugs such as heroin.

Of cigarette caused deaths?

- More than [480,000](#) deaths annually (including deaths from secondhand smoke)
- Exposure to secondhand smoke causes an estimated [41,000](#) deaths each year among adults in the United States

As bad as the heroin drug problem is, 10 times more people die from cigarettes every year. More people die, annually, from second hand smoke than die from heroin and prescription opioids combined.

The cigarette epidemic has not gone away and is far worse than what the heroin epidemic ever thought of being. Both epidemics are horrific.

To combat deaths resulting from the heroin epidemic and opioid use, legislatures in 14 states have allowed their pharmacy board's to allow the drug [Naloxone](#) to be sold over the counter and without a prescription.

In Ohio, we [recently gave the ability to Pharmacist interns](#) to dispense naloxone without a doctor's prescription.

Naloxone (Narcan) saved [2,200 lives in 2016](#) and experts agree that with easier access and lower cost to provide Narcan that it can save even more lives going forward. Statewide more than [7,800 Narcan kits were purchased with state grant money](#)

Clearly the state of Ohio is invested in saving the lives of those addicted to opiates.

Yet, while the legislature seeks to reduce the cost and improve access to life saving measures for those addicted to opiates , the Governor of Ohio is suggesting the exact opposite when it comes to combating cigarette related deaths. He wants to put a 69% tax on vaping - a less harmful smoking alternative.

Vaping is to cigarettes what Narcan is to Heroin. It is a lifesaver for many. But, unlike with Narcan, the vaping industry is not asking the state to purchase vaping products for those addicted to cigarettes. Even despite, the taxes on cigarettes that are supposed to finance programs designed to reduce cigarette use. Keep the money, we are a free-market solution that works!

Vaping, according to the Royal College of Physicians is a [less harmful form of nicotine delivery](#) compared to smoking. Vaping, while [popular](#), should be viewed, not as a vice, but as

a therapeutic and less harmful replacement for cigarettes, no different than nicotine gums and patches, both deliver nicotine in alternative methods, just as vaping does.

If the governor is going to tax vaping products at 69%, what rationalization does he have for not taxing nicotine gums and patches at 69%? Why aren't nicotine patches and gums considered vice products and subject to Ohio's "sin" taxes? I can answer that, "because, when used correctly they reduce the dependence on tobacco products and thereby reduce the harmful effects." Because vaping looks similar to smoking many misperceive vaping as having the same negative health effects as cigarettes when their effect is equivalent to patches and gums.

Can vaping be abused? Most certainly, but so can nicotine gum and patches. Due to vaping replicating the smoking experience, many people have testified, myself included, to finding it easier to quit smoking, without the help of a physician, just by vaping.

Healthcare costs, as we all know are high, and vaping is a cheap alternative for millions of Americans and thousands of Ohioans to successfully eliminate or reduce their cigarette usage.

Am I a physician? No I am not.

But many physicians are so confident that vaping is so much healthier than smoking cigarettes they are recommending vaping now in order to save lives and improve health.

In the United Kingdom, the entire healthcare system is recommending vaping/e-cigarettes.

See exhibit:

I smoked for 29 years and was able to quit by myself because of vaping and I am now leading a much healthier life. I have not had a cigarette for just over 8 years. I was so impressed by this product and its effects that I now own a vaping business. I am very passionate about helping smokers. Over the past 7 years I have helped 1000's of smokers successfully switch to vaping.

A 69% tax will put myself and my employees out of business. Current vapers will source their products online or from other states. They will avoid the tax and resent the imposition of either making their own products or returning to smoking cigarettes.

Just the threat of a 69% tax has stifled investment into the vaping industry in Ohio and compromised innovation that may have saved more lives.

A 69% tax will mean more people will keep smoking.

A 69% tax will mean worse health and more deaths by cigarettes.

The governor is misguided on the matter of vaping and is seeking to balance the budget with the lives of Ohioans.

I ask you....no, I implore you ... you must remove this tax from the governor's budget! Lives are depending on it!

Thank You

W.Michael McCrary

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