

Testimony before the Ohio Senate Finance Committee
May 31, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and members of the Senator Finance Committee, my name is Julie Turner from Dayton, Ohio.

As a 42-year cancer survivor of stage III Hodgkin's Disease, I have spent much of my adult life supporting the American Cancer Society. In the last 15 years, I have served as a leadership volunteer with the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network because I believe, like thousands of our members across Ohio, that working to enhance public policy will have a massive impact on the mission to end cancer. I was diagnosed in December of 1974 when any cancer diagnosis was often a death sentence. I received cutting edge medical treatment at the Ohio State University Medical Center. Memories of my lengthy stay at OSU are more than intense. But most VIVID are of patients who were fighting lung cancer, straining to breath with assistance of oxygen. I watched in disbelief as they removed their masks to smoke cigarettes. At that time, you were permitted to smoke in the hospital and I could not understand the hold that tobacco had on them,

Tobacco use is directly responsible for over 30% of Ohio's cancer deaths. That's why I've spent years attempting to make tobacco products more expensive, prohibiting smoking in public places, increasing funding for cessation programs and promoting prevention programs.

I have a precious adopted daughter Jodie. I have done everything in my power to educate her on the harmful effects of tobacco products. She had all the tools that I could share with her to make the right choices for her health and stay tobacco-free. She has never been a smoker and at age 35 she has made me a proud grandmother of 10-month-old Abigail Marie. My daughter stands firm on her non-smoking choice but the father of my granddaughter was not exposed to a tobacco prevention education was susceptible to Big Tobacco's masterful promotion, and is a regular smoker.

I am more than worried about the effects of secondhand smoke on my Abigail and as she grows older that she will be one of the 7,100 Ohio kids under 18 that become a new daily smoker each year. One of the best ways to prevent kids from ever starting the deadly addiction is to properly fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs. Decades of proven experience across the US shows us that without adequate funding for these prevention programs, we are leaving our children vulnerable to the marketing of Big Tobacco's deadly and addictive products.

Today is the World Health Organization's World No Tobacco Day. I'm using this day to deliver (hundreds) of notes of support, to Senate offices, from your constituents across Ohio, that we've collected in just the last week.

As a constituent of Senator Lehner, and a fellow parent, I'm asking this Committee to protect all Ohio kids from the dangers of tobacco by increasing funding for the tobacco prevention and cessation program at the Ohio Department of Health to \$35 million per year. That's a level of funding that had proven results in reducing smoking rates in Ohio from 2002-2008. This program will provide vital programs to help Ohio smokers stop this dangerous addiction and keep kids from starting to use tobacco. I hope you'll invest in tobacco prevention to protect all Ohio kids from making bad tobacco choices. It saddens me that the tobacco industry is still able to target, tempt and hook young folks on their deadly products. With all the science, how can we continue to let this happen?

Please choose our kids over Big Tobacco. This addiction is killing over 20,000 Ohioans a year. Your investment will pay for itself many times over by reducing tobacco use and reducing preventable health care costs. Please choose Ohio kids over Big Tobacco.

Yours in the FIGHT,
Julie Turner, Vice State Lead Ambassador

American Cancer Action Network

