



# TOBACCO FREE KANSAS COALITION

**Written Testimony in Support of**  
**HB 2324**  
**Before the Senate Judiciary Committee**  
**March 13, 2012**  
**By Mary Jayne Hellebust**

Senator Owens and Members of the Committee:

Tobacco Free Kansas Coalition and its partners stand in support of HB 2324, which would include electronic cigarettes under the Kansas law that restricts the selling, furnishing or distributing such products to those under the age of 18. It would also prohibit those under 18 from buying, possessing or attempting to buy or possess such items. The bill is designed to protect children and youth from easy access to products that are self-described as containing nicotine, an addictive substance. Addiction to nicotine in any form can lead to pediatric disease for our Kansas children and teens.

Electronic cigarettes are often promoted as a way to maintain an addiction to nicotine during those times when smoking may not be possible. They are also promoted as smoking cessation devices. However, their innovative design and appearance can appeal to young people as can the variety of flavors the device can be filled with. Some youth may use the devices as a gateway drug to begin smoking regular cigarettes or to maintain nicotine levels when other cigarettes are not available or smoking is not permitted.

Nicotine is derived from tobacco and is the substance responsible for causing addiction to cigarettes or tobacco products. Constriction of airways and blood vessels as well as increased blood pressure and heart rate are common effects of nicotine. The Food and Drug Administration is still researching the make-up of e-cigarettes as tobacco products. At this point there is no evidence that the devices are safe to use, that they are free of contaminants and that nicotine levels are consistent.

Under these circumstances, making it unlawful to sell or provide these products to those under 18 and to restrict access of those under 18 to these products protects the health and well-being of Kansas youth.

Tobacco use is still the single most preventable cause of death in our country, and medical treatment for tobacco-related diseases is a major reason for the increasing costs of health care in the state and in the Medicaid system. And unfortunately, most tobacco use is begun before the age of 19.

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