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www.heart.org

Testimony in Support of SB 316 (written only)
American Heart Association
Tracy Russell, Government Relations Director
February 8, 2018

Chairwoman Schmidt and Members of the Committee:

The American Heart Association is a strong proponent of SB 316, which removes barriers to tobacco cessation treatment for the Medicaid population. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death, taking the lives of 4,400 Kansans each year. Tobacco is a primary contributing factor in heart disease and stroke.

While we have made great strides in reducing tobacco use among Kansans in the aggregate, those below the poverty line bear a disproportionate share of the burden through use rates that are double the statewide average. This population is less likely to have access to care and more likely to be targeted through marketing by big tobacco.

While our primary concern is the health of our most vulnerable Kansans, there is a significant financial cost borne by all Kansans to treat tobacco-related illness. Within the KanCare program alone, Kansas spends \$237.4 million annually on tobacco-related illness. Providing an avenue to quit will improve the health of Kansans and reduce healthcare expenditures for taxpayers.

Fortunately, we know what works when it comes to cessation. Providing counseling and access to pharmacotherapy provides the greatest chance for success, improving the lives of our poor and reducing health care costs. Investing in tobacco cessation is extremely cost-effective as well. There is also a proven track record of success in other states that have implemented comprehensive, barrier-free cessation services. The experience has been one of reduced smoking rates among the Medicaid population and better health outcomes, a win-win for states and their citizens.

The American Heart Association encourages your support for SB 316 as a vote for the health of this underserved population. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.

*"Building healthier lives,
free of cardiovascular
diseases and stroke."*

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