



Testimony of the **Kansas Public Health Association** to the
House Committee on Insurance and Pensions
Proponent for HB 2129 • **February 10, 2021**

Chairman Johnson and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of House Bill 2129 to provide tobacco cessation benefits coverage under the state health care benefits program.

Tobacco use continues to be the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.^{1 2} Survey data collected and analyzed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment show that 17.3 percent of adults currently smoke, or about 381,500 people³. The CDC and the Surgeon General report that Insurance coverage for smoking cessation treatment that is comprehensive, barrier-free, and widely promoted is cost-effective.¹ House Bill 2129 seeks to reduce death and disease by increasing the opportunities for medically supported quit attempts to increase from two per year to four per year for the thousands of Kansans covered through the State Employee Health Plan.

A report prepared for the National Alliance on Mental Illness-NAMI Kansas, by researchers at the University of Kansas School of Medicine, indicates that not only would increasing the supported quit attempts be good for the health of Kansans, it would also be good for the economy. In Kansas, the annual health care costs directly attributed to smoking is \$1.12 billion.⁴ According to the report, moving from limited to expanded coverage for all smokers in the state of Kansas would generate about \$225 million in economic benefit.⁴

Public health practitioners in Kansas encourage the legislature to explore and adopt policy solutions that benefit the health of Kansans. The effects and harms of tobacco are well documented. This legislation has been thoughtfully crafted through a review of best practices and careful work among informed health advocates in Kansas.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brandon Skidmore, President
Kansas Public Health Association

The Kansas Public Health Association is a professional association for Kansas public health practitioners, professionals, and advocates. As a voice for public health, KPHA provides a forum for individuals and organizations to work collectively to assure conditions in which Kansans' lives will be healthy. *(This position reflects the collective position of association members through the action of the Board of Directors and may not necessarily reflect the views of each KPHA member's employer.)*

¹ S. Department of Health and Human Services. Smoking Cessation. A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/2020-smoking-cessation/index.html.

² S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2014. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/50th-anniversary/index.htm. Accessed July 15, 2020

³ . Adult Tobacco Use in Kansas. Kansas Department of Health and Environment. 2020; Available from: http://www.kdheks.gov/tobacco/download/Adult_Tobacco_Use_in_KS.pdf

⁴ Gurley-Calvez, T., PhD, MA, & Sand, J., MPH. (2020). The Economics of Expanded Smoking Cessation Treatment (Rep.). Kansas. doi: <https://tinyurl.com/ROI-study>