

Testimony SB 376 (proponent, written-only)
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Chair, Healthy KC Tobacco Committee

I am a professor at the University of Kansas Medical Center, but the views expressed in this written testimony are my own, reflecting 36 years of clinical practice, research, and service focused on improving the health of my patients and my community. My comments should not be construed to represent any official position of the University of Kansas.

That said, I've watched too many of my patients die from lung cancer. I've seen too many patients with COPD, gasping for air, unable to even walk across the room. I've seen too many of my patients die from heart attacks or lose their feet or toes from arterial disease caused by their smoking.

As a practicing physician, I am thrilled that SB 376 will help the current smokers in my practice quit. My patients often tell me that the cost of cigarettes is a major motivator for quitting. The tax included in SB 376 will provide these smokers with just the 'nudge' that they need to make a quit attempt. And if they are willing to make the attempt, I have lots of tools to help them.

As chair of the Healthy KC Tobacco Committee, I have been working with committed individuals across the state to reduce uptake of smoking by our youth. Each year thousands of children and young adults in Kansas start smoking - 1 in 3 of these new initiates will eventually die from this choice. The increase in the tobacco tax proposed in SB 376 has the potential to dramatically reduce smoking initiation by children and young adults in Kansas. This age group is particularly 'price sensitive' and an abrupt increase in the cost of a pack of cigarettes will have a strong dampening effect on sale and distribution of tobacco products in our schools.

SB 376 is, at its core, a public health bill. As a practicing physician, I strive to impact the lives of my patients, but with your support of SB 376, you can have a much bigger impact on the health of Kansans than I could dream of, even if I were to continue to practice for another 36 years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'E. Ellerbeck', written in a cursive style.

Edward Ellerbeck, MD, MPH