



Senate Revenue Committee  
Chair Burdick

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### **Testimony submitted in support of HB 2870A**

Chair Burdick, members of the committee, my name is Stephanie Tama-Sweet and I am the Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association in Oregon. The AHA/ASA's mission is to build healthier lives, free of cardiovascular disease and stroke. We urge your support of HB 2870A which will contribute to healthier communities and lead to significant cost savings associated with tobacco use and long term management of chronic diseases.

The health impacts of smoking and secondhand smoke are widely documented. Tobacco remains the number one cause of preventable death and disease in Oregon. Every year tobacco use kills 7,000 Oregonians and secondhand smoke causes an additional 800 deaths in Oregon annually. Using current smoking rates, 74,000 kids now under 18 and alive in Oregon will ultimately die prematurely from smoking.

Smoking and secondhand smoke contribute to heart disease, heart attacks and stroke. The following are just some examples of this impact:

- Smoking causes coronary heart disease, the leading cause of death in the United States.
- Cigarette smoking has been associated with sudden cardiac death of all types in both men and women.
- Smoking-related coronary heart disease may contribute to congestive heart failure. An estimated 4.6 million Americans have congestive heart failure and 43,000 die from it every year.
- Strokes are the fourth leading cause of death in the United States. Cigarette smoking is a major cause of strokes. The U.S. incidence of stroke is estimated at 700,000 cases per year.



Children are especially vulnerable to health risks associated with smoking. Children with exposure to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, lower respiratory infections, more severe asthma, respiratory symptoms, and slowed lung growth. Additionally, children whose parents smoke and who grow up in homes where smoking is allowed are more likely to become smokers themselves.

These health consequences of tobacco use are extremely expensive: Oregon spends more than \$1.11 billion in direct medical costs each year for tobacco related issues. This amount covers all payers, both public and private. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, \$347 million of that is in direct Medicaid costs (to the Oregon Health Plan). The rest is paid by private insurance or out-of-pocket. Allowing counties to raise Oregon's tobacco tax would help curb these costs as people smoke less and live healthier lifestyles.

HB 2870A will give counties the ability to tax cigarettes and other tobacco products. If counties choose to increase the tax they are required to invest at least 40 percent in public health programs and services for tobacco prevention and cessation and for mental health and addiction services. Extensive research by organizations such as the American Heart Association, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Campaign for Tobacco –Free Kids, the World Health Organization and others has shown the best ways to reduce smoking rates are to raise the price of tobacco, adequately fund tobacco prevention programs and support comprehensive smoke-free communities. Passage of this bill will help protect our children from the dangers of tobacco and will contribute to healthier communities across the state.

We strongly urge your support.

Thank you,

*Stephanie Tama-Sweet*