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Testimony in Support of HB 2269
House Federal and State Affairs Committee
February 9, 2023

Representative Carpenter and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to share testimony supporting the increase in the legal age to purchase tobacco products in Kansas to 21. My name is Chrissy Mayer, and I am the Chief Community-Based Services Officer at DCCCA. We provide a variety of substance abuse prevention and mental health promotion services, including community education, training, and technical assistance. We are partners in the Kansas Prevention Collaborative supported through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant. Additionally, we provide mental health and substance use disorder treatment, child welfare services, and research and evaluation services. DCCCA has served Kansas communities, children and families for nearly 50 years.

In 2019, the minimum age for purchasing tobacco was increased nationally to 21 years. During this time, states implementing Tobacco 21 (T21) laws have seen several positive impacts on young people. Utilizing national data from the 2019 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (for persons aged 18 to 20 years) and the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (for high school students), the overall percentage of 6th-12th graders perceiving that it was easy to purchase tobacco products decreased by nearly ten percentage points. Additionally, those aged 18-20 living in states with T21 policies had a lower likelihood of being a current smoker. Tobacco use remains a major public health concern in Kansas. Increased adoption and enforcement of T21 policies has significant benefits on public health.

In addition to public health implications if T21 legislation is not passed, Kansas also faces financial penalties. If Kansas chooses not to increase the statewide legal age to purchase tobacco products to 21 this legislative session, we expect to receive a 10 percent penalty to the amount we receive in Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funding which would equate to a loss of \$1.2 million each year. The block grant funds are critical to providing substance abuse prevention and treatment services in our state. A reduction in funds will limit services and resources that can be provided to Kansans.

Thank you for your time today. I encourage you to support an increase in the legal age to purchase tobacco products from 18 to 21 to support the health and well-being of all Kansans. Passage of HB 2269 also ensures that our state is not penalized with a reduction in block grant funding.

Respectfully submitted,

Chrissy Mayer
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