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Health and Human Services Committee

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Madam Chair and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about HB 2340 and HB 2039. My name is Tanya Dorf Brunner, and I am the Executive Director of Oral Health Kansas, Inc. We are the statewide advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the importance of lifelong dental health by shaping policy and educating the public so Kansans know that all mouths matter. We achieve our mission through advocacy, public awareness, and education. Oral Health Kansas has over 1,100 supporters, including dentists, dental hygienists, educators, safety net clinics, charitable foundations, and advocates for children, people with disabilities and older Kansans.

Oral Health Kansas stands in support of the current Kansas Clean Indoor Air Act.

The link between tobacco use and periodontal disease is strong. According to the American Academy of Periodontology, smokers are more likely to have calculus (hard plaque), deep pockets between the teeth and gums, and loss of the bone and tissue that support the teeth. Untreated, periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss. According to the Centers for Disease Control, over 40 percent of daily smokers over age 65 do not have teeth, while only 20 percent of nonsmokers are toothless.

A Centers for Disease Control study published in the Journal of Periodontology demonstrated the link between smoking and periodontitis. In the study Dr. Scott Tomar found that smokers are three to six times as likely as nonsmokers to have periodontitis. He said, "Cigarette smoking may well be the major preventable risk factor for periodontal disease. The good news is that quitting seems to gradually erase the harmful effects of tobacco use on periodontal health."

According to the American Cancer Society, approximately 90 percent of people diagnosed with oral cancer are tobacco users. Again, smokers are six times as likely as nonsmokers to get oral cancer.

The Mayo Clinic's Nicotine Dependence Center has shown through studies that "de-normalizing smoking" through a smoking ban decreases the urge to smoke in many individuals and can help lead to successful quitting.

The health benefits of the smoking ban extend to the oral health of thousands of Kansans, and these benefits translate into savings in the state's health care system.

We urge the Committee to retain the Kansas Clean Indoor Air Act and continue protecting the oral health of Kansans everywhere. Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony.

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