TESTIMONY

House Committee on Commerce
SB 1004
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Submitted by:
Judy Stewart, Director, State Government Relations
American Cancer Society, Great Lakes Division

Katherine Knoll, Regional Vice President of Advocacy
American Heart Association, Midwest Affiliate

Please accept this written testimony from the American Cancer Society, Great Lakes Division and the American Heart Association, Midwest Affiliate in opposition to SB 1004, a bill that would cap the tax on cigars at 50 cents.

Cigar smoking is deadly and addictive and, just like cigarette smoking, produces toxic secondhand smoke.* While cigarette smoking has generally been declining over the past several years, sales of cigars have been rising fast - especially among kids. One reason for the increase is the fact that many kids, and even some adults, still do not realize that cigars are so addictive, harmful, and deadly. Another reason cigar smoking is on the rise is that Michigan taxes cigars at a much lower rate than it taxes cigarettes.

By under-taxing cigars, states lose a lot of revenue. The failure to tax cigars adequately creates a public health problem, as well. It keeps cigar prices lower, thereby increasing the number of kids who try cigars and become addicted and reducing the number of adult smokers who are incentivized to quit. In addition, when faced with cigarette tax and price increases, cigarette smokers who might otherwise quit or cutback are often turning to under-taxed, less-expensive cigars, instead.

There is no justification for giving cigars any special tax treatment. They are deadly and addictive, and cigarillos and other smaller cigars are often aggressively marketed to new users by having various kid attractive sweeteners and flavors such as banana, grape, strawberry, and chocolate. In addition, some people use "blunt" cigars for pot smoking by tapping out a portion of the tobacco and replacing it with marijuana.†

I hope that we can count on your vote against SB 1004.

* National Cancer Institute (NCI), *Cigars: Health Effects and Trends,* Smoking and Tobacco Control Monograph No. 9, 1998, http://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/tcrb/monographs/9/index.html. Baker, F, et al., "Health Risks Associated with Cigar Smoking," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 284(6):735-740, 2000.

† For more on cigar smoking harms and trends, see the Campaign's factsheet, *The Rise of Cigars and Cigar-Smoking Harms*, http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0333.pdf.