

June 19, 2026

Remarks for Heidi Low, Regional Advocacy Director, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Thank you, Natalee and Lily for sharing your powerful stories and turning those experiences into positive action. You are what's going right in Montana tobacco prevention. Strong youth programs. Meanwhile, as Denver alluded to, neither one of you have seen a state cigarette tax increase in your lifetime. No one under the age of 21 has.

This matters because youth are especially price sensitive, which means a \$2 increase to the cigarette tax will bring youth smoking down by almost 13% and over 4,000 MT adult smokers will quit smoking.

Right now, about 17% of high school students use e-cigarettes and 7% use nicotine pouches – neither of which are currently being taxed at all.

It's past time to take action and Montana voters agree.

This poll shows 77% of Montana voters support a cigarette, e-cigarette and nicotine tax increase, with 59% of voters saying they strongly support this comprehensive tobacco tax increase.

Support is broad, remaining high across party lines, with 76% of Republicans, 85% of Democrats and 69% of Independents all in agreement.

Taxing all tobacco products is also the most popular option to help any budget shortfalls with a majority of Montana voters at 77% compared with 22% support for raising gas taxes and 23% support for establishing a statewide sales tax.

Industry has historically targeted youth and others who are particularly sensitive to price increases. Not only is this policy a win financially for individuals, offering relief from smoking caused health and financial burdens, it's also a financial win for the state.

The long-term health care cost savings from adult and youth smoking declines would be over \$75 (76.62) million.

These findings show broad support for policies that can reduce tobacco use and keep nicotine products from reaching more young people.

At this time, I'd like to open it up for any questions.