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BI-STATE PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION



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February 25, 2019

Senate Finance Committee
State of Vermont
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

Re: H. 47 - An Act Relating to the Taxation of Electronic Cigarettes

Sent via email to fbrown@leg.state.vt.us

Dear Chair Cummings and Members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Bi-State Primary Care Association appreciates the opportunity to provide comment in support of H. 47 - An Act Relating to the Taxation of Electronic Cigarettes.

Established in 1986, Bi-State Primary Care Association (Bi-State) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)(3) charitable organization that promotes access to effective and affordable primary care and preventive services for all, with special emphasis on underserved populations in Vermont and New Hampshire. Bi-State's Vermont membership includes 12 Federally-Qualified Health Centers delivering primary care at 64 sites and serving over 177,000 Vermonters. Our members also include Area Health Education Centers, Grace Cottage Rural Health Clinics, Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, and Vermont's free clinics.

Bi-State and our members are dedicated to the health of Vermonters and we support passage of H.47 as a way to deter the use of e-cigarettes. We are particularly concerned about the impact of e-cigarettes on youth and young adults. Our FQHC members alone see over 33,500 patients under the age of 18 every year. The 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports that one in eight Vermont high school students uses e-cigarettes. According to the CDC, e-cigarettes serve as an entry point for nicotine use among this younger demographic. Furthermore, the majority of high school students believe (incorrectly) that occasional e-cigarette use causes little or no harm. Based on statistics like these, the U.S. Surgeon General has called the use of e-cigarettes by young people an "epidemic". Bi-State supports the taxation of e-cigarettes as a deterrent to purchasing and using these products.

Along with taxing e-cigarettes, we urge lawmakers to also direct revenues from this tax towards prevention and education programs. Bi-State and our members place a high value on creating a community health context that reduces high risk behavior, such as nicotine use. We know from the Surgeon General that there is significant confusion around e-cigarettes and the harm that they cause. It will be critical to educate all Vermonters, but especially youth, on the risk posed by use of e-

cigarettes and other novel forms of nicotine delivery. As primary care providers, we are positioned to be able provide support education to Vermonters throughout the state.

Significant price increases paired with education and prevention campaigns have reduced the rates at which Vermonters use tobacco products, and the rates at which they decide to *ever* use these products. We believe the same principle applies to tobacco substitutes. We support H. 47 as another step forward in reducing the harm caused to Vermonters by use of nicotine, in any form.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please let me know. I can be reached at gmaheras@bistatepca.org or 802-229-0002 ext. 218.

Sincerely,

Georgia J. Maheras, Esq.
Vice President, Policy and Programs
Bi-State Primary Care Association