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February 23, 2012

Senate Committee on Ways and Means
Senator David Ige Chair
Senator Michelle Kidani, Vice Chair

Hearing:
State Capitol Room 211
February 24, 2012, 9:00 a.m.

SB 2422, SD1 - Relating to Tobacco Products

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in strong support of SB 2422, SD1, which increases the tax on tobacco products, other than large cigars, to \$3.20 or 70% of the wholesale price, whichever is greater.

The American Cancer Society is the nationwide, community-based, voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service. Advocating for strong tobacco control laws to reduce the incidences of lung and other cancers is part of our mission.

This measure increases the tax on other tobacco products to bring that tax in line with the tax on cigarettes. Raising tobacco taxes reduces tobacco use, reduces death and disease from tobacco, reduces the health care costs associated with tobacco, and raises new revenue for the State.

Studies have shown that strong tobacco taxes reduce consumption. Low-income populations are four times more likely to quit smoking in response to cigarette price increases.¹ Because these particular populations bear a disproportionate burden of death and disease caused by tobacco, they would obtain substantial health benefits from quitting.² Further, low-income and minority youth are less likely to start smoking as a result of a cigarette price increase than other youth.

¹ See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Responses to Increases in Cigarette Prices by Race/Ethnicity, Income, and AgeGroups—United States, 1976-1993. MMWR. 1998;47:605-609.

² See Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. State Medicaid Coverage for Tobacco Dependence Treatments—United States, 1998 and 2000. MMWR 2001;50(44):979-982.

Smoking remains the leading cause of cancer and health problems. We urge this committee to move this measure forward. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide comments on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cory Chun". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Cory Chun
Government Relations Director