



**Testimony Re: House Bill 7127, Budget Article 5, Section 4 regarding the Tobacco Program**

**House Finance Committee**

**February 4, 2026**

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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today. Rhode Island KIDS COUNT would like to voice its support for House Bill 7127, Budget Article 5, Section 4. This would increase the tax on cigarettes sold from \$4.50 to \$5.25 per pack of 20 cigarettes.

Rhode Island has made progress in reducing youth tobacco use. Cigarette use among U.S. middle and high school students continues to reach record lows. [In 2024, 2.8% of Rhode Island high school students](#) and 1% of high school students nationally reported currently smoking cigarettes.

Despite this progress, tobacco use continues to be [the leading preventable cause](#) of death and disease in both Rhode Island and the United States. [In 2023](#), approximately 12% of Rhode Island high school students reported having ever tried cigarettes. An estimated 1,100 youth in Rhode Island will try smoking cigarettes for the first time this year, and nearly 90% of adults who currently smoke cigarettes report starting to use tobacco or nicotine products by age 18.

Increasing the tax on cigarettes reduces consumption. [The American Lung Association](#) reports that every 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces consumption by about 7% among youth. **We urge you to continue to increase the cigarette tax to reduce cigarette consumption among Rhode Island youth.**

We urge you to include this cigarette tax increase in the FY 2027 budget. This increase will help reduce tobacco use among Rhode Island youth and bring in revenue for Rhode Island. Thank you for your continued efforts to reduce tobacco consumption in Rhode Island and for the opportunity to provide this testimony.