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**For Immediate Release: Contact:**

**Tuesday, April 14, 2015 Shelly Kiser, 740-739-0187**

**Coalition Urges House to Restore Tobacco Tax Increases to Help Ohio’s Kids and Budget**

This statement can be attributed to Shelly Kiser, spokesperson for the Investing in Tobacco-Free Youth Coalition, on the removal of the tobacco tax increases in the HB64.

“We are extremely disappointed that the House of Representatives has removed from its budget bill the necessary and widely supported $1.00 increase in the state’s cigarette tax. By removing the proposed increase, the House is missing a unique opportunity to help our children and our state’s bottom line.

We will continue our efforts in support of the Governor’s strong tobacco prevention package, which includes the $1.00 per pack increase in the cigarette tax and an equivalent increase in the tax rate on other tobacco products. His proposal will help reduce youth smoking rates by 12 percent, prevent 65,000 kids from becoming adult smokers, prompt more than 70,000 adults to quit smoking and prevent more than 40,000 premature deaths caused by smoking.

Ohio has the eighth highest smoking rate in the country. This year, 20,200 Ohioans will die due to smoking. The health care costs of tobacco use in our state top $5.6 billion per year. Reducing tobacco use in our state needs to be a high priority for our lawmakers. Today’s action shows clearly that House members are out of touch with what Ohio needs and what Ohioans support.

We will work with the Governor and other supporters to enact a $1.00 increase in the cigarette tax and an equivalent increase in the other tobacco products. We urge the legislature to do the right thing.”

***Investing in Tobacco-Free Youth*** *is a coalition supported by a diverse group of organizations spearheading a campaign to reduce the burden of tobacco use in Ohio. The coalition is led by the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.*

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