



American  
Heart  
Association.

February 25, 2021

Senator Molly Baumgardner, Chair  
Senate Education Committee  
**Neutral, SB 235**

The American Heart Association believes that supporting local democracy and decision-making in Kansas is important to health. Here in Kansas, we have taken many positive steps to improve the health of people across the state. We want to make sure cities, towns, and counties continue to have the option to build on this progress and pass laws to help their communities and local businesses thrive.

Increasingly, states are enacting laws that prevent local governments from acting on certain issues. We have examples of it happening here in Kansas in areas of nutrition, rent and compensation to name a few.<sup>1</sup>Our state should support local governments that want to pass laws to protect health and promote equity in their communities. What works in one part of Kansas does not always apply to other parts of our state. Local governments should be able to pass laws to meet the needs and values of the people living in their communities. **When states block locally elected officials from passing laws, it can put the health and well-being of residents at risk and increase disparities.** One example of successful local policy and advocacy are local ordinances that raised the minimum legal sale age of all tobacco products from age 18 to 21. Communities across Kansas had the foresight to protect their youth by passing these “T21” laws.<sup>2</sup>

We want policies to be effective—meaning the policy has the intended impact and resources are not wasted—and we want everyone to benefit from the changes policies create. But we need to start with the areas that have the greatest health or economic need, then expand. **That is why it is so important for local elected officials, including school board members, to be able to create and adapt policies to meet the needs of their communities.**

As a leader in our state, you can help protect local democracy and preserve the ability of local governments to build on the progress that has been made at the state level.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kari A. Rinker".

Kari Rinker, MPA  
State Government Relations Director  
American Heart Association

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5425871/figure/fig1/>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.khi.org/assets/uploads/news/14901/t21\\_handout.pdf](https://www.khi.org/assets/uploads/news/14901/t21_handout.pdf)