



Members of the Committee,

My name is Joe Hafley. I am a former casino worker who spent more than seven years on casino floors, breathing secondhand smoke I did not choose. I submit this testimony in strong support of HF 781 because no worker should be forced to sacrifice their health simply to earn a living.

When people discuss smoking in casinos, the focus is often placed on patrons and personal choice. What is rarely acknowledged is the worker who has no choice at all.

When I worked on the casino floor, secondhand smoke was constant. It did not come and go — it lingered. It filled the air for entire shifts. It settled into our clothes, our hair, and our skin. I would go home after work, and my family could smell the smoke on me before I even spoke. I would wake up the next morning still tasting it.

This exposure did not end when my shift ended — it followed me home.

I do not smoke. Yet I inhaled toxic smoke for hours every shift — day after day, year after year.

Over time, my body responded exactly as medical science predicts. I developed persistent coughing, shortness of breath, and chest discomfort. I watched coworkers experience the same symptoms. Many stayed silent because they needed the paycheck. Others eventually left jobs they loved because their health could no longer withstand the exposure.

I am testifying today not only for myself, but for the many casino workers who cannot be here — because they are working long shifts, fear retaliation, or are already dealing with the health consequences of this exposure.

At hearings like this, the opposition often relies on familiar claims. It is important to separate what is said from what is true.

The claim: Ventilation systems and air filtration protect workers.

The truth: Ventilation does not eliminate secondhand smoke exposure. Smoke particles circulate, linger, and continue damaging lungs long after they are inhaled. Every major public health authority agrees that the only proven solution is a 100% smoke-free indoor environment.

The claim: Casino workers choose this job and accept the risks.

The truth: Iowa does not allow workers to be exposed to asbestos, toxic chemicals, or other known carcinogens simply because they “chose the job.” Secondhand smoke is a known cause of cancer, heart disease, and lung disease, and there is no safe level of exposure.

The claim: Smoke-free policies will hurt casino revenue and cost jobs.

The truth: As of today, twenty states, plus Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, require all commercial casinos to be 100% smoke-free indoors, and those casinos continue to operate successfully. Protecting workers’ health does not undermine economic stability.

The claim: The industry should handle this voluntarily.

The truth: Workers have waited for years while breathing smoke every day. Workplace safety laws exist precisely because voluntary policies fail when profit conflicts with health.

Iowa already protects workers from known occupational hazards. HF 781 simply applies that same standard consistently.

I am the Founder and Leader of CEASE — Casino Employees Against Smoking Effects — in Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. **We will continue filing and supporting legislation every year until casino workers are fully protected, because delaying action does not stop the harm.**

Every day this bill is delayed, workers continue breathing toxic smoke they did not choose. Every year of exposure increases the risk of irreversible illness. These workers are parents,

spouses, and caregivers — and their health should never be negotiable.

**No one should have to choose between a paycheck and their lungs.**

**I respectfully and personally urge you to be a strong YES on HF 781.** This vote is not about politics or preference — it is about whether Iowa will protect workers from a hazard we already know how to prevent.

How this legislature responds will be part of the public record — and workers will remember who stood up for their health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Joe Hafley