

**Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Public Hearing Testimony- February 23, 2009**

**SB 930 –An Act Concerning the Cigarette Tax, The Tobacco Products Tax and the Alcoholic Beverages Tax**

Good Afternoon Chairman Daily, Chairman Staples and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Julie Stenz and I would like to take this opportunity to urge support for **SB 930 –An Act Concerning the Cigarette Tax, The Tobacco Products Tax and the Alcoholic Beverages Tax**

Over the past three years I have served as Connecticut's lead advocacy volunteer representing the American Cancer Society. In my role I have met with cancer survivors, caregivers, and vocal advocates that have shared their heart felt stories regarding the battles that they have waged and witnessed with cancer. I have met too many that have developed lung cancer, or lung related health effects, in particular due to tobacco products.

I have become an outspoken advocate for the Society through my own personal experiences. My mother lost her battle to lung cancer less than ten years ago. Tobacco has taken the lives of so many, we need to work to decrease its usage and solve the health effects that are a result of its use.

By increasing tobacco taxes we will witness lower smoking rates, and this would occur in a relatively short amount of time. It will also provide additional revenue to the state. I am not advocating for this proposal to punish those that smoke, but rather offer this as an opportunity to help them. Many smokers wish they could quite, an increase might encourage more people to stop. I would encourage the state to take a portion of the revenue generated from such an increase in the tax and dedicate it towards tobacco cessation programs.

An increase in the tobacco tax may also encourage youth to avoid taking up the deadly habit. Currently, approximately 18% of youth in Connecticut smoke, if an increase in the tobacco tax were to be implemented and cessation efforts were to be provided, that percentage might decline to 8%. With approximately 1,000 of our youth in Connecticut becoming daily smokers, we could see that number greatly decrease.

I commend members of the Appropriations Committee for imposing an additional tax on Tobacco Snuff products. Over the years these are products that have not seen additional taxes, and yet they contribute to the negative health effects of tobacco products.

In this difficult economy the residents of Connecticut understand that you will need to make tough decisions. I urge you to support SB 930, and would ask that you consider raising the tax even more than is proposed. This is an opportunity to help create a better health policy along with provide the state with additional revenue.