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**Testimony of the American Lung Association in
Connecticut in Support of Raised Senate Bill No. 437,
An Act Concerning the Tobacco Product Tax**

March 15, 2010

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Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee
Room 3700, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Daily, Representative Staples, and Members of the
Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee:

The American Lung Association in Connecticut submits written
testimony in strong support of Raised Senate Bill No. 437, An Act
Concerning the Tobacco Product Tax.

Our organization's reason for supporting this legislation is simple:
increasing tax rates on tobacco products reduces tobacco use. This is
especially true among price sensitive youth. Higher tobacco tax rates
will also bring in far more new revenue than are lost by the
reductions in tobacco product sales. As more people quit, tobacco
related health care costs will also be reduced.

In order to avoid making less-expensive other tobacco products a
gateway to cigarette addiction (especially with minors) or an
alternative to quitting or cutting back for smokers, it is important
that state tax rates on other tobacco products parallel the state's tax
rate on cigarettes. Due to national smoking declines and smokers
switching to lower taxed tobacco products, in 2008 compared to
2007 cigarette sales dropped by 4.3 but sales of small cigars
increased 15.1%, regular cigars by 4.5%, smokeless tobacco by
7.6% and roll your own tobacco by 13.9%. By not taxing these other
tobacco products, the state loses revenue every time a smoker
switches from cigarettes to one of these cheaper alternatives.

Fortunately, Senate Bill 437 offers state lawmakers a way to both
fund our State and give smokers a reason to quit. If passed, Senate
Bill 437 will not only ensure that all levels of non-cigarette tobacco
products will be taxed consistently, it will not assure funds are
directed to tobacco prevention and cessation program activities.

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 437

Over the past decade, the State of Connecticut has dispersed over 7 million dollars of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund to help implement comprehensive strategies to prevent initiation of new smokers, reduce exposure to second hand smoke and increase cessation. While we strongly support this bill, we want to be clear; funds must be earmarked to maintain current programs, develop supplemental strategies to help smokers quit, especially Medicaid beneficiaries, and allocated to achieve full funding at the CDC recommended level for tobacco prevention and cessation activities.

There is still a lot of work that has to be done to ensure that smokers have the resources they both need and deserve to quit as well as ensure that our kids are protected from the tobacco industry.

I thank the committee for its consideration of this bill and I respectfully urge your unanimous support.

Sincerely,
Dawn Mays-Hardy, MS
CT Director Health Promotion and Public Policy
American Lung Association in Connecticut