

March 11, 2010

Senator Paul Doyle

Representative Toni Walker

Re: **HB 5411: An Act Concerning Medicaid**

Why Comprehensive Smoking Cessation for Medicaid Clients Should Be Funded

Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body. Cigarette smoking causes 87 percent of lung cancer deaths. It is also responsible for many other cancers and health problems. These include lung disease, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke and cataracts. Women who smoke have a greater chance of certain pregnancy problems or having a baby die from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

Non-smokers who breathe in secondhand smoke take in the same toxic chemicals as smokers, and through no choice of their own. The 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's report reached several important conclusions: secondhand smoke causes premature death and disease in children and adults who do not smoke; children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk of SIDS, acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma; immediately effects the heart and blood circulation; over a long period of time also causes heart disease and lung cancer.

As a Registered Nurse in Public Health, a former smoker and a smoking cessation counselor, I have witnessed the negative outcomes of smoking on individuals and families, and the difficulties smokers experience in the quitting and staying quit experience. Smoking cessation programs are effective. On average, 27.6% of smokers who receive both counseling and medications are able to quit. The 2008 Clinical Practice Guidelines recommend that all insurers provide coverage for counseling and medications.

Currently, Connecticut does not cover any smoking cessation treatments in its Medicaid plan. In 2006, the state legislature authorized the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services to cover smoking cessation services for Medicaid recipients but the benefit has never been funded. The CT Medicaid smoking rate is higher than the national average – 36% of Medicaid beneficiaries smoke.

Medicaid recipients should have access to comprehensive smoking therapies. These programs are effective in helping people quit. Not only will lives be saved and chronic diseases decreased, but there would be significant savings to Connecticut's Medicaid program. I strongly encourage you to support passage of HB 5411: An Act Concerning Medicaid

Thank you for your attention,

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