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*TESTIMONY OF  
ATTORNEY GENERAL RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
BEFORE THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
MARCH 11, 2010*

I appreciate the opportunity to support the attached amendment to House Bill 5411, An Act Concerning Medicaid.

The attached amendment clarifies the scope of tobacco cessation products and programs that would be covered under Medicaid, requiring the Department of Social Services to implement the program to provide life-saving assistance to the poor.

The amendment -- encouraging thousands of Medicaid beneficiaries to quit smoking -- is a win/win for the beneficiaries and the taxpayers. It provides citizens with better health and saves scarce taxpayer dollars in medical costs.

Smoking kills 4,000 Connecticut residents each year. While adult smoking rates have plummeted from 22.8% in 1999 to 15.9% in 2008, smoking rates among the Medicaid population remains over 30%. Smoking costs Connecticut hundreds of millions of dollars in health care expenses.

It simply makes fiscal and health sense to extend Medicaid coverage to smoking cessation products and programs. Yet, Connecticut is one of only 5 states that do not provide any smoking cessation coverage to their Medicaid population.

Funding should not be a problem. More than \$400 million annually is generated from cigarette taxes and tobacco settlement funds. A small portion of those funds ought to be set aside to assist Medicaid smokers to quit.

Massachusetts has a hugely successful Medicaid program -- more than 35,000 Medicaid smokers have quit. Smoking rates for Medicaid beneficiaries have fallen to 28% from 38% prior to the initiation of the program.

We can -- and should -- implement a similar program here. I urge the committee's favorable consideration of the attached amendment to House Bill 5411.

2010 GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE  
(March 10, 2010)

**SUMMARY:** This proposal would clarify and broaden the tobacco cessation products and services that would be covered under Medicaid

**TEXT:**

Section 17b-278a of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective July 1, 2010*):

The Commissioner of Social Services shall amend the Medicaid state plan to provide coverage for treatment for smoking cessation ordered by a licensed health care [professional] provider. Only a health care provider who possesses valid and current state licensure to prescribe [such] drugs may order treatment that includes legend drugs. [in accordance with a plan developed by the commissioner to provide smoking cessation services. The commissioner shall present such plan to the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and appropriations by January 1, 2003, and, if such plan is approved by said committees and funding is provided in the budget for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2004, such plan shall be implemented on July 1, 2003. If the initial treatment provided to the patient for smoking cessation, as allowed by the plan, is not successful as determined by a licensed health care professional, all prescriptive options for smoking cessation shall be available to the patient.] Such treatment shall be consistent with the United States Public Health Service guidelines for tobacco use cessation and shall include legend and over the counter drugs and counseling by a physician, qualified clinician, or a certified tobacco use cessation counselor. The plan shall limit coverage to no more than two treatment plans per beneficiary annually.