

**Testimony of the American Lung Association in
Connecticut in Support of Raised House Bill No. 6550, An
Act Concerning Medicaid Coverage for Smoking Cessation
Treatment**

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March 15, 2011

Human Services Committee
Room 2000, Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

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Dear Senator Musto, Representative Tercyak and Members of
the Human Services Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to speak in strong support of
Raised House Bill No. 6550, An Act Concerning Medicaid
Coverage for Smoking Cessation Treatment. My name is Dawn
Mays-Hardy and I serve as the Connecticut Director of Health
Promotion and Public Policy for the American Lung Association.

Our reasons for supporting this bill are simple. Providing tobacco
cessation counseling and medication is one of the most clinically
effective and cost effective health services available; according
to the National Commission on Prevention Priorities. Medicaid
recipients in our state continue to smoke at a rate of 36 percent
versus the general population rate of 16 percent. Making barrier
free smoking cessation services available to all Medicaid
recipients will not only save lives, but will save Connecticut
taxpayers money. Connecticut's total annual smoking related
healthcare costs are approximately \$2 billion. Over \$500 million
of these dollars are spent on Medicaid recipients.

The Connecticut legislature actually authorized the Department
of Social Services to provide a smoking cessation benefit for
Medicaid recipients in 2002. But the initiative was never funded.
Connecticut is one of three states in the United States that does
not provide cessation services for Medicaid beneficiaries beyond
the new federal requirement to cover low income pregnant
women under the Affordable Care Act.

Smoking cessation services for Medicaid clients is a proven
success. Massachusetts offers a comprehensive Medicaid benefit
that includes all FDA-approved medications to quit smoking
along with behavioral counseling. A recent study showed that 40
percent of smokers in Medicaid took advantage of the benefit

(over 70,000 individuals). More importantly, the smoking prevalence in the Medicaid population dropped by 26 percent (from 38% to 28%). Massachusetts also saw an almost 50 percent reduction in annual hospitalizations for acute heart attacks and coronary heart diseases resulting in a total cost savings of over \$10 million.

Smoking cessation programs are effective. According to the Department of Health and Human Services Clinical Practice Guidelines (2008), 27 percent of smokers receiving both behavioral counseling and cessation medications are capable of quitting. If Connecticut's program reaches 25 percent, the state would realize a drop of 4,500 Medicaid smokers each year. This would result in significant health improvement and cost savings annually.

We value your deep commitment to advancing strong health policy in our state. We urge you to unanimously support Raised Bill No. 6550 an act concerning Medicaid coverage for smoking cessation treatment. Again, thank you for this opportunity to testify.

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