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**Appropriations Committee
Health and Hospitals - Department of Public Health
February 18, 2014
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network Testimony**

RE: Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Deposits and Allocations

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network strongly supports restoration of cuts made last year to the annual deposit from the Tobacco Master Settlement to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund. We additionally, support full restoration of the subsequent cuts made to the allocation authority of the Trust Fund Board to spend up to \$6 million per year on Connecticut's tobacco control programs.

Tobacco related diseases are the single most preventable cause of death in our society, yet according to DPH statistics, tobacco use kills more people in Connecticut each year than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, homicides and suicides combined. Currently, 17.1% of adults in Connecticut and 15.9% of high school aged kids smoke, spending on average \$3000 per year on the habit. ***Connecticut incurs \$1.63 billion in annual health care costs and another \$1 billion in lost productivity directly caused by tobacco use.***

The recent Surgeon General's report found that while significant progress has been made in reducing smoking over the last several decades, there is still much more work to be done in reducing death and disease from tobacco use. While smoking has declined, cigarettes have become more deadly and the risk of disease and death caused by smoking has not. In fact, smoking is now linked to liver and colorectal cancers, and today's smokers have a higher risk of lung cancer than smokers 50 years ago.^[1] One in three cancer deaths could actually be prevented – or nearly 2,300 cancer deaths in CT this year.

Connecticut receives over \$500 million annually between the MSA funds and tobacco tax revenue. Over the years, however, less than 1% of the cumulative total has been spent in support of tobacco control and smoking cessation programs and services. In 2013 we spent \$6 million on TUC, however in 2014 that number has been cut in half. While the state continues to underfund programs with proven results, the annual health care costs associated with tobacco use continue to increase.

Overall, 4700 people in Connecticut will die from tobacco use in 2014 and sadly, another 4300 will start the habit this year. 120 million packs of cigarettes were sold in CT last year, including 8 million that were smoked by kids. 70% of Connecticut's smokers indicate they want to quit while 40% attempt to quit each year, however only about 5% are successful. Many fail because, in part, of a lack of access to successful cessation programs. Funding tobacco use prevention and cessation programs that alleviate this burden on our citizens and economy are not only consistent with our shared goal of insuring access to care to those in need, it is also the only fiscally responsible approach we can take.

Evidence-based tobacco use cessation methods have been proven to be effective in a variety of populations. Currently TUC services in Connecticut are sparse and under advertised. Programs that do exist at some Community Health Centers, local health departments/ districts, and hospitals, are supported by specific grants from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund, Federal Block Grants or other funding that is not sustainable. Many of these programs cease when these special funds are gone.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend that Connecticut spend \$32 million, or just \$8.92 per capita, annually on programs to prevent kids from ever trying tobacco and to help adults quit. Connecticut has never fully funded its tobacco control programs to the level recommended by the CDC. In fact, if all state spending over the twelve years since the Master Settlement is combined, the total doesn't amount to even one year's recommendation. This proposal is a first step in the right direction.

We can and must do more to improve Connecticut's tobacco prevention and cessation efforts. Restoring previous cuts is a very welcome start. We look forward to continuing to work with the Legislature and the Governor to invest in the health of our citizens – especially our youth. Adequately funding tobacco control efforts in CT will save money and, ultimately, save lives.

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN works to encourage elected officials and candidates to make cancer a top national priority. ACS CAN gives ordinary people extraordinary power to fight cancer with the training and tools they need to make their voices heard.

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^[1] The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Published January 17, 2014. US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, Atlanta, Ga.