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of the Northeast

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January 29, 2014

Testimony before the Appropriations and Public Health Committees

Michelle Caul, Manager of Health Education

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Recommended Disbursements

Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Appropriations and Public Health Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Michelle Caul and I serve as the Manager of Health Education at the American Lung Association (ALA) in Connecticut.

The American Lung Association in Connecticut supports the disbursements of 3 million dollars of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund toward tobacco prevention and cessation services. These funds are vital for the reduction of tobacco related illness such as cancer, heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) as well as mortality.

Last week our organization released its 12th annual State of Tobacco Control Report Card. For the 12th year in a row Connecticut received a grade of F for our investment in the state's smoking prevention and control program. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that Connecticut spend a far greater amount of money per year for an effective comprehensive tobacco control program. Although the proposed amount is far less than what is recommended, 3 million dollars will have a significant impact on reducing the 2.5 billion dollars spent annually in Connecticut due to tobacco use.

The 2011 Connecticut School Health Survey showed, 12% of middle school students and 40.8% of high school students have ever used any form of tobacco with approximately 20% of high school students currently use tobacco products. The data also shows some disparities in tobacco use in Connecticut. It is clear from the data that funding counter-marketing initiatives is necessary to prevent and delay tobacco use initiation among youth. According to the 2012 Surgeon General's Report, mass media campaigns can be one of the most effective strategies in preventing youth smoking.

The CDC reports that 17% of adults in Connecticut currently smoke. Cessation services such as quit lines and counseling for the most

vulnerable populations must remain available. There are disproportionately high number of individuals with mental illness and Medicaid recipients that are current smokers and these populations need services available to them.

We value your commitment to address tobacco use in Connecticut and urge you to direct these funds for initiatives that will reduce healthcare costs, prevent youth initiation and promote the health of the individuals living in our state. In the last legislative session the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund was cut drastically by 50 percent down to \$6 million for 2 fiscal years. We urge you to at least restore that in the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund and disburse these funds as a small step toward funding the tobacco prevention and control program at CDC recommended levels. The state receives more than \$100 million each year from the Master Tobacco Settlement Agreement. Investing more of that money in preventing smoking among kids and helping smokers quit will improve the health of our people and reduce future health care costs.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michelle Caul".

Michelle Caul
Manager, Health Education
American Lung Association in Connecticut