



City of Meriden, Connecticut

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
HEALTH DIVISION

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State of Connecticut Appropriations Committee Public Hearing March 6, 2015 Testimony

RE: Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Allocations

Submitted by: Lisa Pippa, Director of Health and Human Services, City of Meriden

Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

As you are aware the Governor's proposed budget for the FY 2016 and 2017 included the elimination of the \$12 Million annual transfer from the Master Tobacco settlement to the CT Tobacco and Health Trust Fund. Historically Connecticut has spent far less than the CDC recommended funding levels for Tobacco Control, Cessation and Prevention programming and this re-distribution of funds will dramatically diminish existing efforts across the state to provide the greatly needed tobacco programming in the coming years and beyond. As the Director of Health and Human Services here in Meriden and a long term public health advocate I implore you put a mere fraction of the tobacco industry profits back where it belongs.

The Meriden Department of Health and Human Services has been fortunate to successfully compete for several State Department of Public Health "tobacco cessation" grant awards over the years. These grant opportunities would not have been available without the funding appropriated to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund. A grant contract awarded in October 2011 has allowed us to serve over 350 individuals seeking help in their ongoing efforts to quit smoking or the use of other tobacco products to include e-cigarettes. Although Meriden residents have been our target population, no one seeking services has been turned away. Our participants included low income individuals, persons with mental health and or substance abuse problems and pregnant women, all severely at risk for the health damaging and often fatal consequences related to smoking.

We have been proud to serve as a model for tobacco cessation program development and implementation, which can only be achieved and maintained with sustained funding. With staffing that includes a Certified Tobacco Treatment Specialist, we have be able to develop relationships with local health care providers and our area hospital, behavioral health care agencies, local businesses and housing developments, which has provided a steady flow of patient referrals. We in turn were able to provide services and resources unavailable in their own settings to include:

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- Individual assessments and ongoing counseling for clients seeking support in a quit attempt.
- An on-going weekly support group providing an open door policy to accommodate repeat enrollments and the necessary motivation and support to prevent relapse.
- A free 12 week supply of Nicotine Replacement Therapy to active participants.
- Outreach and marketing of the program and motivational workshops to encourage quitting. Several of these resulted in a worksite based cessation program for area businesses implementing expanded tobacco free policies.
- Professional development training on brief interventions for tobacco cessation treatment and the use of approved cessation medications.

If I was to paraphrase an age old saying - an ounce of "cessation" is worth far more than a pound of cure! We cannot begin to calculate the return on our investment, through our programs efforts but here are some quotes from successful clients:

"I wouldn't be alive today if you hadn't helped me quit smoking" ~ Sheila

"I Thank u and the program participants who encouraged me and believed in me when I wasn't believing in myself. I am looking forward to my first full year smoke free. God is Good! I would have liked to have all those from our group get together for a small celebration/update on their stories. I feel connected to them - thanks to u and the program :) It soon will be a year! I will pray for those who were there to quit! I really never thought that I could quit. I feel so empowered! I am also thankful that I am doing something towards my lifestyle changes. Stopping smoking just broke the ice for me! Thanks again for being part of that transformation! ~ Shirley

"Thanks a million ~ never thought I could go without a cig ~ I can even walk by other smokers even though I try not to ~ now that I have control of my life, mind, body and spirit I feel like a million bucks and I save quite a few too! " ~ Tosheen

I hope you will agree; outcomes like those above are priceless. Thank you in advance for your efforts to reinstate monies to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund, and in turn helping to protect the health and wellbeing of Connecticut residents.

Sincerely,



Lisa Pippa
Director of Health and Human Services