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Appropriations Committee Public Hearing  
March 6, 2015

Testimony RE: Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Allocations

Members of the Appropriations Committee:

I have volunteered my time as a member of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board since my appointment in 2009, because I wanted to help insure that appropriated funds were spent efficiently and wisely in an effort to reduce the harmful and ultimately deadly effects of smoking. I am certified as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist and I have coordinated a comprehensive tobacco cessation program for the Meriden Health Department for several years but I am currently transitioning to working as a Facilitator for a Teen Pregnancy Prevention initiative in Meriden because the Health Department's tobacco specific funding stream is due to end in a month's time. Teen pregnancy is clearly another worthy cause but not where my heart is. I assure you, my hourly salary is NOT what has motivated to do the work that I do.

Working in the field since the mid 80s, I believe that I have helped to improve the health and emotional well being of hundreds of individuals impacting both the quality and longevity of their lives. By reducing the numbers of active adult smokers , I 'd like

to think I also helped to prevent many children from experiencing the harmful effects of second hand smoke and in turn reduced the chances of their ever starting. Tobacco cessation programming is generally categorized as a treatment program, but I personally view it as a prevention initiative. I am helping to prevent heart attacks, strokes, lung cancer, emphysema and other forms of COPD not to mention a very long list of related illnesses. For individuals in recovery from other substance use, I am reinforcing their commitment to a "drug free" life style and eliminating a substance from their life that is far more likely to kill them than their previous alcohol, heroin or cocaine addiction. Ironically most of our so called drug treatment programs don't include nicotine addiction. You've already heard a lot of statistics today but my personal favorite is as follows... "Tobacco kills more people than alcohol, illegal drugs, motor vehicle crashes, homicides, suicides and AIDs combined. Shouldn't our efforts to combat the ravaging and devastating effects of tobacco use be equally imbalanced??

Please put the tobacco industry's profits paid to the State of Connecticut as retribution back into the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund where it belongs.