

March 9, 2015

Dear Members of the Finance Committee,

The American Heart / Stroke Association is very concerned over Governor Malloy's decision to eliminate the \$12 million annual transfer from the Master Tobacco Settlement to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) in his biennial budget. This \$24 Million sweep of the funds would leave the THTF with a zero fund balance and bring to a halt most Tobacco Prevention and Control activities, initiatives and programs in Connecticut. There is also significant concern with the decision by the Governor to cut the THTF transfer by half in the out years beginning in 2018.

70% of Connecticut's smokers indicate they want to quit while 40% attempt to quit each year, however only about 5% are successful¹. 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.

The states' failure to adequately fund tobacco prevention and cessation programs is undermining the gains we have seen in reducing tobacco use – the number one cause of preventable death. It is also indefensible given the conclusive evidence that such programs work not only to reduce smoking and save lives, but also to reduce tobacco-related health care costs. These costs total about \$2.03 billion a year in Connecticut, according to the Connecticut Department of Public Health.²

There is conclusive evidence that tobacco prevention and cessation programs work to reduce smoking, save lives and save money by reducing tobacco-related health care costs, especially when part of a comprehensive strategy that also includes higher tobacco taxes and smoke-free workplace laws. Every scientific authority that has studied the issue, including the Surgeon General, the CDC, the IOM, the President's Cancer Panel and the National Cancer Institute, has concluded that when properly funded, implemented and sustained, these programs reduce smoking among both kids and adults. The Community Preventive Services Task Force, an independent expert advisory committee created by CDC, found "strong evidence" that comprehensive tobacco prevention and cessation programs reduce tobacco use among adults and young people, and that these programs are also cost-effective.³

CDC Statistics indicate 4900 people will die in Connecticut this year due to tobacco use, which means, statistically speaking, one or two people will have died from tobacco use during the

¹http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/state_data/data_highlights/2006/pdfs/dataHighlights06rev.pdf

² *The Burden of Tobacco Use in Connecticut*,

http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/tobacco/pdf/burden_factsheet_2014.pdf

³ Farrelly, Matthew C., et al., "A Comprehensive Examination of the Influence of State Tobacco Control Programs and Policies on Youth Smoking," *American Journal of Public Health*, January, 2012

course of this hearing today.⁴ Adding to the tragedy at the same time, someone in Connecticut – with a 90% chance that person is under 18—will have tried smoking for the first time during course of this hearing as well.

The American Heart / Stroke Association appreciates Committee Members considering the significant public health impact the Governor Malloy’s decision will have by eliminating the \$12 million annual transfer from the Master Tobacco Settlement to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) in his biennial budget. This is not good public health policy and it is not good fiscal policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John M. Bailey II". The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

John M. Bailey II
State Director of Government Relations
John.bailey@heart.org

⁴ <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&q=388056&dphNav=>