



Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

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**Testimony of
Norbert Kovacs
Before The Appropriations Committee
Public Hearing Regarding
The Governor's Proposal FY 2016-2017
Biennial Budget
March 6, 2015**

Good afternoon Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Committee Members. My name is Norbert Kovacs, and I am a supporter of CT Coalition for Environmental Justice. I write you to ask that the legislature continue to use the Tobacco Settlement money in support of CCEJ's Asthma Outreach and Education Program rather than fold those monies into the General Fund.

For over fourteen years, CCEJ's Asthma Speakers Bureau educated Connecticut's urban residents by teaching community residents about asthma and its treatment options. Dozens of community members that CCEJ trained spoke about asthma, its triggers, signs & symptoms, and means of treatment to 1000s of urban residents in major cities of our state, including Hartford, Bridgeport, and New Haven. Asthma Speakers did public outreach on asthma at Noah Webster School Urban Earth Day; Hartford's Bulkeley High, Pope Park, Keney Park, and Clark Street School among other community locations. CCEJ taught over 1360 people in Hartford and Bridgeport about asthma in 2013 alone. CCEJ has continued the work of the Asthma Speakers Bureau this past year in its Environmental Justice League of speakers who talk one-on-one with urban residents about asthma, toxics, green cleaning, and air pollution. The Justice League has done valuable work by encouraging people to seek medical help if they have asthma signs and symptoms.

As a result, the Asthma Outreach and Education program that supports the EJ League is helping to avoid costly emergency room visits and hospitalizations—and saving the state money at the same time. About half of asthma-related emergency room visits in our state are paid for by the public through Medicaid. And asthma continues to be a crisis in urban areas where hospitalization and emergency room visits are 2 or 3 times the state average.

So I ask that you continue to use the Tobacco Settlement money in support of CCEJ's Asthma Outreach and Education Program.