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**Testimony of Central Connecticut Health District to the Appropriations Committee
 Regarding the Governor’s Budget**

H.B. No. 6824 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2017, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATED TO REVENUE.

March 6, 2015

The Central Connecticut Health District is opposed to the Governor’s budget option to eliminate the annual transfer of \$12 Million from the Tobacco Master Settlement Fund to the CT Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) for two year, and to reduce that amount to \$6 Million (half) in 2018 when it is reinstated.

Tobacco use is a major preventable cause of premature death and disease. Some Connecticut specific statistics are presented below:

Tobacco's Toll in Connecticut	
Adults who smoke	15.5%
High school students who smoke	13.5%
Deaths caused by smoking each year	4,900
Annual health care costs directly caused by smoking	\$2.03 billion
Residents' state & federal tax burden from smoking-caused government expenditures	\$670 per household
Estimated annual tobacco company marketing in state	\$78.1 million
Ratio of tobacco company marketing to total spending on tobacco prevention	22.2 to 1

Among the critical interventions to reduce tobacco use and its health consequences is the availability of comprehensive tobacco cessation programs in diverse settings. The Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board has a long history of funding such programs including the statewide Connecticut QuitLine and community-based individual and group cessation programs.

Since 2003, the Board disbursed \$7.1 million to provide a statewide comprehensive free telephone and web-based tobacco use cessation coaching service that assist residents in their efforts to quit tobacco use through the provision of individualized counseling, information, self-help materials and nicotine replacement therapy. Counselors assess the caller's stage of readiness to change and offer options such as, referral to one-on-one counseling, referral to local programs, and/or mailed educational material. A community resource database is maintained and used, as appropriate, to refer callers to local programs, including smoking cessation programs, smoking addiction support groups and others. As of June 2014, a total of 50,070, individuals were served by the QuitLine, with an average quit rate of about 27%. That is 13,519 fewer smokers, and lowered health care costs.

Additionally. Since 2003, the board disbursed \$7.1 million for community-based smoking cessation programs and one smoking cessation program administered by the Department of Correction. These programs provide evidence-based tobacco cessation assistance to individuals who want to quit by discouraging the use of tobacco products through education, skill building, one-on-one or group counseling and pharmacotherapy. In this time period, cessation programs were provided to pregnant women and women of child-bearing age; individuals with serious mental illness; general population and individuals under the jurisdiction of the Department of Correction. For the community smoking cessation programs only, a total of 7,825 individuals were served since 2003, with an average quit rate of about 35%. DOC is in the process of developing procedures with UConn School of Social Work (Peer Recovery Personnel), Federally Qualified Health Centers, FORDD Clinic and DOC's Addiction Services Personnel to collect data on quit rates for inmates released into the community.

Local health departments and districts rely heavily on these services being available to tobacco using populations. Currently, the THTF almost the exclusive source of funding for CT's tobacco cessation efforts. Without sustainable funding for the THTF, the advances we have made in reducing morbidity and death from tobacco use will be lost as a new generation is engulfed by its addictive powers. We must sustain funding and commit to long term funding of such cessation efforts. Without funding the state QuitLine would cease to exist and cessation opportunities would be critically diminished for the 70% of smokers who want to quit. We urge you to not adopt the Governor's budget option for the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund and to reinstate the current \$12 Million annual transfer.