

March 9, 2015

CT General Assembly, Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee  
Legislative Office Building 3700  
Hartford, CT 06106

**Testimony Regarding SB946, An Act Concerning Revenue Items to  
Implement the Governor's Budget**

**Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding  
Committee:**

My name is Jane Reardon. I am a Pulmonary Clinical Nurse Specialist for Hartford Hospital and a long time volunteer for the American Lung Association. I am deeply committed to the American Lung Association's mission which is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Every day I see the negative impact tobacco has on our Connecticut residents which is why I need to express my strong support of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund's work and urge you to reject the Governor's proposal to eliminate the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Transfer for fiscal years 16 and 17.

Each January, the American Lung Association releases its State of the Tobacco Control Report in which we grade each state in the nation on four different areas of tobacco control policy. Connecticut repeatedly earns an F for Tobacco Program Funding. Now I have to ask, if your child were to come home with an F in math on his report card, would you respond by decreasing the amount of time and resources you invest to help him with his math homework? Most rational adults would respond by increasing their investment of time and maybe even spend money to hire a math tutor because they'd like to see their child improve and they realize that a greater investment is required in order to see a better grade on next quarter's report card. The same logic holds true when it comes to making strides in public health. That is why it is not only disappointing but completely baffling that Governor Malloy made the decision to cut the entire 12 million dollars from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund for each of the next two years.

As a nurse for nearly 50 years, I have worked with hundreds of people who are profoundly addicted to tobacco products, who are motivated to quit, but lack the resources to do so. The majority continue to smoke, despite a guilt producing knowledge of its effect on their failing health. I watch as my patients struggle for breath even when at rest. They can no longer participate in work and family activities that bring them joy. These are not weak or unmotivated people. These are people who became addicted to a legal product that has been peddled to them by an industry that spends billions on clever marketing each year.

The Tobacco & Health Trust Fund helps counteract the tobacco industry's false promises and gives Connecticut residents the tools they need to beat this powerful addiction and become smokefree for good. In recent years, the THTF has been the only source of funding for our state's Quitline. I certainly understand that you are being forced to make tough decisions in this tight economic climate. However, we need to acknowledge that Connecticut receives over \$500M in tobacco taxes and Master Settlement dollars. Connecticut's state cigarette tax is

\$3.40/pack; it is inconceivable to me that the state wouldn't spend any of these dollars on helping the 70% of smokers who want to quit to do so. We should not be balancing the budget on the backs of smokers who are the ones who need the most help quitting their deadly addiction. So I ask you to reinstate the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Transfer in the budget for both FY16 and FY17, not make draconian cuts which will decimate the entire program.

I thank you for your time and consideration. I urge you to make fighting the leading cause of preventable death and disease a priority in your budgetary decisions.

Thank you.

Jane Z. Reardon, APRN