

RE: S.B. No. 946 AN ACT CONCERNING REVENUE ITEMS TO IMPLEMENT THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET.

Honorable members of the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify about the critical importance of maintaining funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs in the State of Connecticut. **The existence of the Tobacco Health and Trust Fund is vital to the health and welfare of CT citizens.**

Tobacco smoking is the top cause of death from preventable diseases like lung cancer, coronary heart disease and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In Connecticut, we lose 4900 of our mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, friends and other loved ones to tobacco use every year and the CDC estimates that 56,000 kids alive today in our state will die a premature death from tobacco if current smoking rates continue. In addition, every year we spend over \$2 billion on tobacco-related health care costs (\$1.2 billion of which is paid by citizen taxes) and lose about \$1.25 billion on smoking-related productivity losses.

We are all keenly aware of the difficult budgetary situation and appreciate the agonizing choices you face in attempting to resolve it. However, we believe that **the proposed complete elimination of these funds will have a drastic impact on the tobacco use rates of the citizens of CT.** The existing CT tobacco health and trust fund programs, are cost-effective and they work. These include media campaigns to educate kids about the impact of tobacco use and to encourage smokers to quit, community and school programs to high risk groups of adults and youth and telephone quitlines to help youth and adult smokers quit smoking.

States that have implemented these programs have seen dramatic declines in youth and adult smoking. **As a result of these programs we have seen dramatic declines in smoking rates in Connecticut.**

However, we have not been completely successful. **13.5% of youth and 15.5% of adults still report that they are smoking cigarettes and 9.8% of youth and 1.9% of adults report using smokeless tobacco products. This problem is further compounded by the recent significant rise in the use of e-cigarettes.** In 2014, almost 22% of high school students and 12% of middle school students in Southeastern CT report using e-cigarettes. Importantly, 15% of these youth had never tried cigarettes before. We know very little about the safety of these products and we urgently need programs to prevent use among youth. **In the absence of the funds to develop such programs we could possibly be taking a huge step backwards in our efforts to reduce tobacco use in Connecticut.**

Elimination of programs funded by THTF will almost certainly result in increased smoking and reduced quitting leading to increased heart attacks, strokes, asthma, and complications of pregnancy. **This increased disease burden will lead to increased health care costs in CT.**

In contrast, maintenance and extension of these programs will reduce health care costs. For example:

- A recent study in the *American Journal of Public Health* found that for every dollar spent by Washington State's tobacco prevention and control program between 2000 and 2009, more than five dollars were saved by reducing hospitalizations for heart disease, stroke, respiratory disease and cancer caused by tobacco use. Over the 10-year period, the program prevented nearly 36,000 hospitalizations, saving \$1.5 billion compared to \$260 million spent on the program.



- A study of California's tobacco prevention program found that for every dollar the state spent on its tobacco control program from 1989 to 2004, the state received as much as fifty dollars in health care cost savings in the form of sharp reductions to total healthcare costs in the state.
- A study of Arizona's tobacco prevention program found that the cumulative effect of the program was a savings of \$2.3 billion between 1996 and 2004, which amounted to about ten times the cost of the program over the same time period.

Tobacco prevention and cessation programs reduce smoking, save healthcare dollars, and most importantly, save lives.

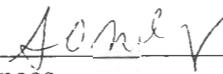
Media prevention campaigns keep kids from smoking and counteract the influence of the \$8.8 billion spent by the tobacco companies each year on marketing and promotion of tobacco products.

Cuts in these programs will effectively destroy the tobacco control infrastructure that Connecticut has built over years of effort. Even if funds are restored after the proposed two year hiatus it will take years to rebuild this infrastructure.

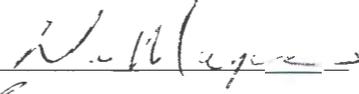
We urge you to immediately restore funding for the Tobacco Health and Trust Fund.

Thank you.

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