

My name is Natalie Cullen Shurtleff. I work for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. But tonight I am here to share my story and tell you why the state of Connecticut MUST restore \$12 million in funding to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) and tobacco control programs.

Last May I got married and on one of the happiest days of my life two important people were missing, my paternal grandparents. I lost my grandmother to cancer at a very early age. While I never got the opportunity to know my grandmother, my grandfather has been a big part of my life. My grandfather was unable to be there for a different reason, even though he would have loved to see the first of his grandkids get married, his health kept him at home. My grandfather smoked for nearly his entire life, and the years of damage from tobacco use are evident. His damaged lungs have left him dependent on oxygen and unable to leave the house. When someone visits he mostly just sits and listens, because his shortness of breath prohibits him from holding a conversation. And too soon tobacco will take his life.

My grandfather started smoking in an age where we didn't know the damaging health effects of tobacco use. But we now know better. We know that tobacco use will kill 4900 people this year in Connecticut. And we know for far more people, like my grandfather, tobacco will cause debilitating health conditions. But yet 4300 kids in Connecticut will try their first cigarette this year. Many of those kids will become addicted life-long smokers and face the same negative health outcomes of my grandfather.

We are dropping the ball by not educating Connecticut kids about the dangers of tobacco. We are dropping the ball by not providing tobacco users with the tools to quit. I am extremely disappointed that the Governor's proposed budget continues to provide ZERO funding to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund and tobacco control programs. Aren't our kids worth more than zero dollars? I believe Connecticut should follow the lead of states that fully fund tobacco control programs and they have proven results to show for it. States like Washington that saw a 5-1 savings with their program between 2000-2009 and cut adult smoking by a third and youth smoking in half. Connecticut would have similar results if we fully funded tobacco control at \$12 million.

I am urging you to restore funding to fight tobacco use in our state, so that today's youth do not face a future like my grandfather.