



**Testimony of Amy Barkley, Regional Advocacy Director  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**

**In Opposition to Funding Cuts to Ohio's Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Program in HB 49  
Before the Health and Medicaid Subcommittee of the OH State Senate Finance Committee**

**May 24, 2017**

**Chairman Hackett and members of the subcommittee, my name is Amy Barkley and I am a Regional Advocacy Director for the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. We are the nation's largest non-profit organization dedicated solely to advancing policies proven to prevent and reduce tobacco use. Sustaining adequate funding for statewide evidence-based tobacco prevention and cessation programs is a major priority for us, and we track and support activity on this issue across the country.**

**We are deeply concerned about proposed cuts to Ohio's successful tobacco prevention and cessation program. While we understand that Ohio's budget situation requires difficult decisions, it would be penny-wise and pound-foolish to cut funding for a program that is so essential to the public health and the fiscal health of the state. In the end, failure to adequately address tobacco use – which takes a tremendous human and financial toll on the state – will only make the budget situation worse.**

**As you know, tobacco use is the # 1 cause of preventable death in Ohio. In this state, 15.1% percent of high school students still smoke, and 7,100 kids become regular smokers each year. Tobacco use claims 20,200 lives and costs the state \$5.64 billion in health care bills annually. Significant efforts to make the next generation tobacco-free and help smokers who want to quit will save lives and taxpayer dollars, but the state is spending just \$13.5 million this year on tobacco prevention and cessation programs. That's a mere 10.3% of the \$132 million recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To cut an already under-funded program makes no sense.**

In addition, Ohio will collect \$1.33 billion in revenue this year from the tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes, and at least some of that tobacco-related revenue should be used to address the tobacco problem. I ask you to also consider that tobacco companies are spending \$420.1 million each year to market their deadly and addictive products in Ohio. That's 31 times what the state spends on tobacco prevention. We urge you to make it a priority to keep kids from ever using tobacco and helping smokers who want quit, rather than cut funding, which plays right into the hands of Big Tobacco.

Another reason that this proposed funding cut is so unfortunate is that, in the early 2000's Ohio was a leader in tobacco prevention and cessation and had the lower smoking rates to prove it. However, the dismantling of the Ohio Tobacco Use and Prevention Foundation in 2008 left Ohio dead last in the country on prevention funding. The General Assembly made what could be called a token investment again in 2011, but as I've previously stated, funding levels are severely lagging what's needed to reduce tobacco use in the state.

It's time Ohio joins other states with well-funded, sustained tobacco prevention programs which have seen remarkable progress. Florida, with one of the longest-running programs, reduced its high school smoking rate to 5.2 percent this year, one of the lowest rates ever reported by any state. One study found that during the first 10 years of its tobacco prevention program, the state of Washington saved more than \$5 in health care costs for every \$1 spent on the program. These programs work! They are proven to save lives and taxpayer dollars.

It's critical that this year's budget puts Ohio's kids, and the health of all its citizens, first by increasing tobacco prevention and cessation funding to \$35 million a year – not cutting funding for an already inadequately funded program.

Thank you for your consideration.

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