

May 31, 2017

Chairman Oelslager, Ranking Member Skindell, and Members of the Senate Finance Committee—

I was just informed by the American Cancer Society of the House's actions to cut critical funding for our state's tobacco prevention and cessation programs. I stand opposed to this action.

Smoking sickens our citizens. It ends the lives prematurely for too many members of our community. A study by Jill S. Rumberger, PhD, at Pennsylvania State University, reported that in Ohio the annual direct costs to the economy attributable to smoking was nearly \$14 billion (2010 dollars). This includes workplace productivity losses of close to \$3 billion, premature death losses of \$5.7 billion, and direct medical expenditures of \$5.2 billion.

Though recent reports on the number of cigarette users appear to have plateaued, studies by Erika Trapl, PhD, at Case Western Reserve University, have demonstrated that more of our young adults and teenagers are becoming addicted to nicotine. This is not through cigarettes necessarily; but by e-cigarettes and vaping, through cigars and hookah pipes. Thus a new generation of nicotine dependency is beginning to erode into the progress that had been made in the past few decades. In fact, when these alternative systems of nicotine delivery are accounted for, the number of young African American dependent on nicotine nearly doubles that of cigarette use alone.

Therefore this is not the time to cut the funding for our state's smoking prevention and cessation program. In Rumberger's study, the ratio of benefits to cost is as high as \$2.88 saved per dollar spent on smoking cessation programs. This does not even account for the cost of human suffering; in the cancers caused and in the grief of losing your loved ones. Reducing our dependency on cigarettes and other types of smoking through smoking prevention and cessation program helps our state's budget for the long term, and improves the lives and health of our citizens.

BENJAMIN D. LI, MD, FACS
Cancer Center Director
MetroHealth System
Edward G. Mansour Professor of Surgical Oncology
Case Western Reserve University
Cancer Care Pavilion, Suite C2100
2500 MetroHealth Drive
Cleveland, OH 44109-1998

