



April 7, 2015

To: Senate Committee on Appropriations
From: Rebecca Ryan, American Lung Association in Vermont
Subj: FY16 Budget: Tobacco Evaluation Review Board and Tobacco Control Program Evaluation

The American Lung Association and partners in the Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont respectfully requests that you:

- Commit to level funding Vermont's comprehensive tobacco control program in FY16 at \$3.9 million as agreed upon in the [FY14-16 Sustainability Plan for the Tobacco Control Program](#) by the Secretary of Administration, Secretary of Finance and Administration, the Department of Health, the Blueprint for Health and the Vermont Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board (VTERB).
 - Oppose amendments proposed by the Administration to Title 18, Chapter 225 that would eliminate the budget for VTERB, changing it from an independent board with oversight of the tobacco control program budget and program to an advisory group, and eliminating the program's independent evaluation.
- 1) **As an independent board, VTERB guides the state's tobacco control program and policies based on research and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) best practices and not politics.** The idea of creating an independent board came from the original CDC best practice recommendations in 1999. If VTERB were made an advisory board to the Commissioner of Health, program and policy decisions would likely be influenced by the Administration at that time, and not evidence-based programs and best practices.
 - 2) **VTERB works with the independent evaluator (RTI International) to keep the tobacco control program on course and consistent with the science and CDC best practices, ensuring a return on investment.** For example, based on RTI's recommendation, the program is now strategically focusing a large portion of its health communication efforts on individuals with low socioeconomic status who smoke at a higher rate than the general population. In addition, when the CDC updated *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control* in 2014, VTERB recommended department/agency funding and program components align with the new CDC guidance. This recommendation resulted in a shift of funds from the Agency of Education to the health department. This decision was based on best practices and most effective use of limited funding.
 - 3) **VTERB serves as a catalyst to increase coordination across the components of the tobacco control program and enhance the collaboration among the Departments of Health and Liquor Control and the Agency of Education.** For example, the board, in collaboration with the health department, develops an annual plan. This plan aligns the work of the Department of Liquor

Control (youth access enforcement) and the Agency of Education (prevention) and the Department of Health (tobacco cessation, health communication, community coalitions, and youth groups).

In summary, the role of VTERB in the comprehensive tobacco control program is as important as the health communications and cessation activities handled by the health department because it independently ensures results-based accountability across state entities and program activities.

Thank you.