



April 20, 2015

To: Senator Jane Kitchel, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations
From: The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Vermont
Subject: Tobacco Control Program Funding and Chronic Disease Prevention Funding

Dear Senator Kitchel;

Thank you very much for meeting with us Friday to discuss the FY16 budget and specifically the funding for the Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board and the Ladies First Program. We appreciate your time and hope you will consider the following as possible solutions to questions you raised during our discussion.

Tobacco Evaluation and Review Board and Program Evaluation

There is a broad consensus that the role of the Board needs to remain independent as envisioned in the legislation authorizing Vermont's Tobacco Control Program and the Tobacco Trust Fund. As you know, the House declined to follow the recommendation by the Administration that the Board be turned into an advisory board to the commissioner of Health, but did not include funding for the operation of the Board and the independent evaluation. This cut amounts to \$199,000, leaving \$25,000 for expenses of the Administration's proposed advisory board.

We discussed the importance of funding the independent board, at what level and with what staffing. You were clear that you did not see additional funding available in the Big Bill to cover these costs and that there may need to be some reallocation of funds within the existing program components to make this happen.

After discussing this issue further, our Coalition feels there are solutions that could be considered without taking funding away from effective program components. We ask that one or a combination of the following options be considered:

- Direct funds from the State Health Care Resources Fund to the board and evaluation from new revenues generated by increases in the cigarette and other tobacco products excise taxes. For example, a \$1.25 per pack increase on cigarettes raises \$7.2 million according to JFO estimates.
- Take \$500,000 from the \$1 million in attorneys' fees from the RJR settlement that the House allocates to several general fund expenses in Section C.104 of H.490, direct the \$500,000 to the Tobacco Trust Fund and specify that for each the next four fiscal years, the amount of \$199,000 will be allocated to the AHS Central Office for the operations of the Board. This would sustain the overall program at close to the levels agreed to in the Sustainability Agreement.
- Alternatively, for FY 2016, appropriate \$199,000 to the Board from the \$836,000 currently remaining in the Tobacco trust Fund.

- If the Legislature decides that funding for the Board and the independent evaluation must come from existing allocations for overall tobacco program appropriations, make an appropriation of \$199,000 and require those allocations to be determined by the Secretary of Administration, the Secretary of Human Services, the Chair of the Board and the Commissioner of Health.

Ladies First Program

Suggestions:

- Please consider an adequate state investment into the Ladies First program for a targeted outreach program in order to expand the utilization of this front line screening program. This outreach could be implemented in tandem with eligibility for other state programs, until the state's Integrated Eligibility system is realized.
- In section E.312.1(a) add the following modified language:

The Commissioner of Health shall develop a marketing plan for Ladies First, a health screening program for women, to increase awareness of the available services provided to eligible women **and to take affirmative steps to enroll more women in this program.** In addition, the Commissioner shall provide a plan to be submitted to the Joint fiscal Committee on or before September 15, 2015 that details how the Ladies First **marketing and enrollment plan** will be implemented, **together with any necessary cost estimates to assure measurable results.**

CHAMPPS Obesity Prevention Funding

Though funding for the CHAMPPS obesity prevention grants was not discussed during our meeting with you last week, we'd like to reiterate the request made by the American Cancer Society-Cancer Action Network and the American Heart Association during the advocates day hearing on April 7th that the Senate restore the \$300,000 in obesity prevention funding that was eliminated in the Governor's budget proposal.

As noted during that testimony, the Vermont Department of Health has deemed obesity as a significant public health problem, so severe in fact, that VDH has stated that the state needs to take an approach similar to that taken to reduce opiate use in Vermont.