



**Testimony of Michael Rollo, Government Relations Director,
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network**

In Support of Increasing Funding to the State's Tobacco Prevention and Control Program

February 21, 2023

Good afternoon, Chair Lanpher, Chair Kitchel, and members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees. My name is Michael Rollo, and I am the Government Relations Director for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). ACS CAN, the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, supports evidence-based policy and legislative solutions designed to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. As the nation's leading advocate for public policies that are helping to defeat cancer, ACS CAN ensures that cancer patients, survivors, and their families have a voice in public policy matters at all levels of government.

On behalf of ACS CAN, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of increasing funding to Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program by \$1.7 million annually. If passed, this increase would bring funding levels for VDH's tobacco prevention and treatment program up to three quarters of the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommended level of \$xxx for the state. With this funding, VDH could continue and expand their proactive counter advertising campaigns.

As you may recall, during last year's budget deliberations, \$1million in additional one time funding was appropriated for community based grants to combat youth vaping. This funding was allocated not under the Department of Health, but instead was placed under the Division of Substance Use Programs (DSU). Although well intentioned, the demand for this funding outpaced the resource and did nothing to address the deficiencies in underfunding of counter advertising efforts by the department health tobacco control program.

Due to sharp increases in youth tobacco use in recent years, largely due to skyrocketing rates of e-cigarette use, the decades of progress that has been made in reducing tobacco use rates in youth is now in jeopardy. Here in Vermont, 26.4% of high school students use tobacco products, with higher rates among dual users.ⁱ Is it any surprise that youth rates are so high when the tobacco industry spends approximately \$15.1 million dollars annually in VT to market cigarettes and smokeless tobacco?ⁱⁱ This figure doesn't even include their other deadly and addictive products like e-cigarettes. When you consider the staggering amount that the industry spends versus the amount VDH has allocated (approximately \$784,000), you can see why advocates are concerned and are asking for additional resources.





Research shows that the more states spend on comprehensive tobacco control programs, the greater the reductions in smoking. The longer states invest in such programs, the greater and quicker the impact. When appropriately funded in accordance with US CDC recommendations, comprehensive tobacco control programs are able to reduce tobacco use.ⁱⁱⁱ

This year alone, it is estimated that more than 4,370 Vermonters will be diagnosed with cancer. An estimated 1,000 deaths are caused by smoking each year in Vermont including 29% of cancer deaths. Smoking is estimated to cost Vermont \$404 million in direct health care costs, including \$93.7 million in Medicaid costs annually.

For these reasons, we urge your committees to vote in strong support of increasing funding by \$1.7 million annually for Vermont's tobacco prevention and cessation program. Investments in this important program are investments that have been proven to result in substantial returns – both in terms of lives and dollars.

ⁱ United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, <https://nccd.cdc.gov/Youthonline/App/Results.aspx?LID=VT>

ⁱⁱ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Vermont. Updated April 16, 2022, <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/vermont>

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

