

Public Health Committee JOINT FAVORABLE REPORT

Bill No.: HB-6974

AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF FUNDS IN THE TOBACCO

Title: SETTLEMENT FUND.

Vote Date: 3/5/2025

Vote Action: Joint Favorable Substitute

PH Date: 2/21/2025

File No.:

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SPONSORS OF BILL:

The Public Health Committee.

REASONS FOR BILL:

This bill would require that annual funding from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund for the state's tobacco control programs to be \$32 million as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This amount is up from the current \$12 million that is in the Governor's proposed budget. Currently, and for 2025, the entire annual disbursement from the Tobacco Settlement Fund goes into the General Fund. The board of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund must recommend annual disbursements to programs with the specific purposes of prevention, education, and cessation. These recommendations are submitted to the Appropriations and Public Health committees for their approval.

The substitute language requires that beginning in fiscal year 2026, these funds must be annually directed to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund rather than the General Fund.

RESPONSE FROM ADMINISTRATION/AGENCY:

None expressed.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Bryte Johnson, CT Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN):

ACS CAN strongly supports increasing tobacco control funding from the current \$12 million, as included in the Governor's budget, to the CDC recommend level of \$32 million as contained in this bill. This increased amount will provide continuity of programs and services for people across the state looking to quit tobacco use. Evidence suggests that cigarettes are being manufactured and marketed in ways that make them more deadly than ever. Many people who use tobacco fail attempts to quit in part, due to a lack of access to successful cessation programs. Funding tobacco use prevention and cessation programs as well as preventing people from ever starting to use tobacco is consistent with our shared goal of ensuring public health and is the only fiscally responsible approach to take. Providing a continued annual \$32 million of long-term funding for these essential programs is critical so that our children can grow up, not as the next generation addicted to tobacco, but as the first tobacco- free generation.

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA):

Increased funding for tobacco control programs to prevent and reduce tobacco use is a logical step to continue the state's tobacco control initiatives following the passage of Tobacco 21 and the re-establishment of the Tobacco Trust Fund. CHA looks forward to working with the Public Health Committee to secure passage of this important public health initiative.

Ruth Canovi, Director of Advocacy for the American Lung Association:

Tobacco use remains a major public health crisis and is the leading cause of preventable disease, death, and addiction in our state. As the public health community makes progress with existing programs, the tobacco industry develops new ways to manufacture and market tobacco products to adults and our youth. High school tobacco use in our state is 12.7%. Tobacco use costs Connecticut more than \$2 million in health care costs which includes \$559.8 million in Medicaid spending. The Association is encouraged by the good work of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund and thankful to the Committee for their leadership on this issue.

Jim Williams, American Heart Association, Government Relations Director-CT:

Mr. Williams pointed out that Connecticut spent \$0 on tobacco control between 2016 through 2021. Then in 2022 and 2023 invested \$12 million. This amount is currently in the Governor's proposed budget. The Association is pleased and fully supports this bill asking for the CDC recommended amount of \$32 million. Mr. Williams also pointed out that Connecticut receives annually more than \$400 million from the multi-state Master Settlement and tobacco sales revenue. Unfortunately, in Connecticut, since this revenue is placed in the General Fund it often goes toward other programs in the state budget. We need to use this money more wisely and effectively as it has been proven that prevention and cessation programs not only save money for the state, but also alleviate the human toll associated with tobacco use.

Melissa Perez-Constantine, Program Coordinator of Catalyst CT, The Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization (RBHAO) for Southwestern CT:

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in our state. The tobacco industry has a horrifying history of targeting marginalized communities to addict them to their deadly products. Considering the amount of money our state receives, it is imperative that we use this money for programs that have proven successful. The recommendations of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund have been approved by the Appropriations and Public Health committees. The first round of contracts is in negotiations. Don't slow this momentum. Please allow the community organizations eligible for funding to get these programs up and running. Our state needs to transfer sustainable and reliable funds to the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund every year until tobacco use is an issue of the past.

The following individuals submitted testimony in support of this bill echoing the comments expressed above:

- Kathy Hanley Behavioral Health Program Manager Western CT.
- Jennifer Muggeo, Director of Health, Ledge Light Health District.
- Geralyn Laut, RBHAO.
- Ingrid Gillespie, Director of Prevention, Liberation Programs Inc, Member of MATCH Coalition.

NATURE AND SOURCES OF OPPOSITION:

None expressed.

Reported by: Kathleen Panazza

Date: March 6, 2025