



**TEXAS
TOBACCO
CONTROL
PARTNERS**

February 23, 2021

Texas Senate Finance Committee
PO Box 12068
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Chair Nelson and committee members,

The Texas Tobacco Control Partners urge the Senate Finance Committee for a restoration of funding for the state's tobacco prevention and cessation program back to the level it was in the 2016-17 budget cycle: \$12 million per year.

Tobacco remains the number one preventable cause of death in Texas. Smoking causes approximately 28,000 deaths in Texas every year. It kills more people than alcohol, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs, murders, suicides, and weather-related causes combined. Nationally tobacco claims the lives of nearly half a million Americans every year. With the rise in youth e-cigarette use, Texas cannot afford continued cuts to tobacco prevention and cessation funding.

In addition to the lives lost, the toll of tobacco is also devastating in an economic sense for Texas' families, businesses and taxpayers, costing \$8.85 billion in annual health care expenditures in Texas, including \$1.96 billion in costs to the state's Medicaid program. That breaks down to a \$759 tax burden per household for smoking-caused government expenditures. Additionally, it is estimated that the tobacco industry spends more than \$600 million annually marketing their products to Texans. In contrast, the state of Texas has only budgeted \$9.2 million to combat tobacco use. That's a 66:1 ratio of money spent to addict Texans to tobacco compared to money spent to prevent them from starting and help existing smokers quit. The Center for Disease Control recommends \$264 million.

Texas has the tools to aggressively fight tobacco use, but they must be funded. Programs like the Quitline, which equip smokers with the tools they need, or Say What! a youth-focused program encouraging peer to peer support to avoid tobacco use, can and do work, but only with substantial funding. Texas receives annual revenue from the national tobacco settlement and tobacco taxes totaling close to \$2 billion annually, but we spend only about one half of one percent of this funding to prevent kids from starting tobacco use or to help people who want to quit tobacco. According to the CDC, nearly 7 in 10 current smokers reported they wanted to quit smoking; Texas can and must help them. With the epidemic of e-cigarettes sweeping Texas youth, these programs are even more



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essential to help prevent an entire new generation from becoming addicted to tobacco products.

The Texas Tobacco Control Partners coalition is committed to reducing the toll of tobacco in Texas, which is why we supported raising the age of sale for tobacco products from 18 to 21, and why we're calling for e-cigarettes to be licensed and taxed as tobacco products. But the state of Texas must invest in comprehensive prevention and cessation programs as well. These programs help prevent youth from ever starting smoking, help adult smokers quit, and provide resources to ensure retailers are compliant with state law and not selling to people underage. We urge you to bring the tobacco program funding back to the level it was three sessions ago.

We hope you will take the necessary steps to secure increased funding to address the state's leading preventable cause of death and the rise of youth e-cigarette use – and to achieve the flexibility needed to utilize all established best practices more seriously.

Thank you again for your time and for the important work you do.

Texas Tobacco Control Partners:
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Lung Association in Texas
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Texas PTA
Texas Association of Family Physicians
The Cooper Institute
Texas Medical Association
Texas Public Health Coalition
Texas Pediatric Society
University of Texas MD Anderson (resource)