


LATE



To: The Honorable Josh Green, M.D., Chair, Committee on Health
The Honorable Suzanne Chun Oakland, Vice Chair, Committee on Human Services
The Honorable Clarence K. Nishihara, Vice Chair, Committee on Health
The Honorable Les Ihara, Jr., Vice Chair, Committee on Human Services
Members, Senate Joint Committee on Health and Human Services
From: Trisha Y. Nakamura, Policy and Advocacy Director 
Date: February 8, 2011
Hrg: Senate Committee on HTH/HMS; Feb 10, 2011 in Rm 016 at 1:15 p.m.
Re: **Comments re SB 925**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on SB 925, which will provide an appropriation of \$3,000,000 to Healthy Start. The comments here focus on providing your honorable committees with information about the Tobacco Settlement Special Fund. And to share our concern about the further erosion of funds away from tobacco prevention and treatment.

The Coalition for a Tobacco Free Hawaii (Coalition) is the only independent organization in Hawaii whose sole mission is to reduce tobacco use through education, policy and advocacy. Our organization is a small nonprofit of over 3,000 organizations and members that work to create a healthy Hawaii through comprehensive tobacco prevention and control efforts. The Coalition started in 1996, under the auspices of the American Cancer Society. The Coalition, along with its founding members, played a key role in establishing the Tobacco Prevention and Control Trust Fund.

Hawai'i receives Tobacco Settlement moneys as the result of a settlement entered into between 46 states and the major tobacco companies to recover damages for tobacco-related health care costs paid by taxpayers because of the harms caused by tobacco. By joining the settlement, Hawai'i made a promise to the people of Hawai'i to reduce youth use of tobacco and to advance public health.¹ The Coalition's asks the Committee to remember the reason we have the tobacco settlement: Hawaii residents lost their lives to smoking and because of the tobacco industry's interest in maintaining profits. We must work to make sure the next generation never experiences the suffering of those who died and those whom they left behind.

¹ Hawai'i upon signing the settlement, agreed to "reduc[e] underage tobacco use by discouraging such use and by preventing Youth access to Tobacco Products" and avoid further cost of litigation to "achieve for [Hawai'i and its] citizens significant funding for the advancement of public health." (See Master Settlement Agreement, Recitals. Available at <http://ag.ca.gov/tobacco/pdf/1msa.pdf> (last visited Jan 28, 2010).

Our programs are working to make sure this doesn't happen. From 2002 to 2008, there are 42,300 fewer adult smokers in Hawaii, saving 14,100 lives from tobacco-related deaths and saving our State an estimated \$402 million in direct medical costs. There is no mistake—this consistent dedicated source of funding from the Tobacco Settlement (from the tobacco industry which has cost our State billions of dollars in health-related costs) has resulted in lives and dollars saved.

Although we've made significant progress in reducing tobacco use and saving lives because of the investment in tobacco prevention and control, tobacco use remains a serious health issue. Tobacco continues to kill more people than alcohol, murders, AIDS, car crashes, illegal drugs and suicides COMBINED. In fact, lung cancer associated with tobacco use kills more women than breast cancer in Hawai'i. Hawai'i still has over 150,000 adult smokers throughout the State. And more than 1,000 Hawai'i youth become daily smokers each year. Smoking costs us over half a billion dollars per year in smoking-related health care costs and lost productivity. Clearly, the work of tobacco treatment and prevention is not over.

When Hawai'i started receiving tobacco settlement funds in 1999, 25% of the funds were dedicated to tobacco prevention and control efforts, 35% for the Department of Health, and 40% for the Rainy Day Fund. Since then, the portion for tobacco prevention has been cut down to 6.5%. We are concerned that this portion will continue to drop and concerned that we will see the end of resources for efforts that save lives and keep kids from tobacco.

Because of our concern for the people of the State, the Coalition urges the Committee to ensure funding for tobacco prevention and tobacco cessation work in perpetuity. All that stands between the tobacco industry and our kids is our prevention efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the funding for critical tobacco prevention and control funds. We ask that you continue funding for tobacco prevention and control via the Tobacco Prevention and Control Trust Fund so that these community-based services can continue. **Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this matter.**