



Texas Legislative Budget Board  
P.O. Box 12666  
Capitol Station  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Legislative Budget Board and legislative committee members:

The Texas Tobacco Control Coalition fully supports the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Legislative Appropriations Request and exceptional item related to reducing tobacco use. Under the proposal, tobacco prevention and cessation funding would increase to help more Texans have access to and take advantage of tobacco cessation and prevention resources.

Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and increases the risk for many types of cancer, heart attack, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, and other diseases. Commercial tobacco products are addictive and deadly. Tobacco use remains the nation's number one cause of preventable disease, death and disability. An estimated 28,030 deaths in Texas are caused by smoking each year. The most recent data shows 11.3% of adults in Texas (nearly three million) smoke and nearly one in five high school students are using tobacco products. Smoking related healthcare costs in Texas are estimated to be \$10.29 billion annually.

Unfortunately, tobacco companies outspend the state of Texas at a rate of more than \$105 to \$1 to market their addictive products compared to state investment in programs that protect the health and lives of Texans.

Thanks to legislative leadership, Texas has recently advanced policies that will help, like raising the age of sale for tobacco products from 18 to 21 and investing in the state Quitline to expand access to nicotine replacement therapy and counseling. But the state of Texas must significantly increase funding for comprehensive fact-based prevention and cessation programs.

Research shows that the more states invest in comprehensive tobacco control programs, the greater the reductions are in smoking. A 2013 study found one tobacco control program saved over \$55 in health care costs for every \$1 invested.

By fully funding the DSHS tobacco control program's appropriations request as well as the exceptional item, the legislature will continue to support and bolster Texas programs that aggressively fight tobacco use. Programs like SAY WHAT!, a high-school-focused, peer-to-peer support advocacy program, Peers Against Tobacco, a college-based education program, and the state Quitline, which equips people who smoke with the tools they need to quit an incredibly addictive product, can and do work. Unfortunately, despite a recent increase, Quitline funding is still below the national median, as the Quitline is funded at \$1.31 per smoker, compared to the national median investment of \$1.93. DSHS also funds tobacco prevention and control coalitions, which empower local communities to prevent and reduce the use of tobacco products. These coalitions often bring together leaders from across the community, from business to law enforcement, teachers, and religious leaders, to work collectively against tobacco use in their communities. Due to limited funding, only three coalitions have been



established statewide, which cover eight counties, leaving the vast majority of the state without local funding to address critical needs at the local level.

We know that if someone does not start using tobacco by the time they're 21, they are incredibly unlikely to ever start. But with the youth vaping epidemic, the decades of progress made in reducing youth tobacco use rates is now in jeopardy. As the tobacco industry evolves, the need for a comprehensive, well-funded strategy for tobacco prevention programs has never been greater. It is imperative that programs are funded to reach Texans young and old in all 254 counties.

At minimum, we hope the department's exceptional item request is accepted and the final budget will demonstrate a renewed, robust commitment to addressing Texas' leading cause of preventable disease, death and disability, and the rise of youth e-cigarette use – and achieve the flexibility and staffing needed to utilize all established best practices more seriously.

Sincerely,

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Texas Tobacco Control Coalition members:  
American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network  
American Heart Association  
American Lung Association  
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids  
Preventing Tobacco Addiction Foundation  
Parents Against Vaping E-Cigarettes  
Texas Academy of Family Physicians  
Texas Medical Association  
Texas PTA  
Texas Pediatric Society  
The Cooper Institute  
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center (Education Resource)