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Pallone Admonishes Christie's Elimination of New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program

By Ramyond Zaccaro | January 30th, 2014 - 6:23pm

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, Congressman Frank Pallone, Jr. (NJ-06) sent a letter to Governor Chris Christie (R-NJ) admonishing his administration's elimination of New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program. Programs like this serve as a statewide effort to establish smoke-free policies, help tobacco users quit smoking, and prevent potential users from becoming addicted. The funding for the New Jersey's Tobacco Control Program, first slashed completely in Fiscal Year 2013, remains at zero for Fiscal Year 2014.

Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released their *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Programs—2014 report*. New Jersey currently ranks last among the 50 states and District of Columbia in meeting the funding levels for prevention and cessation programs recommended by the CDC. The CDC recommends that New Jersey allocate \$103.3 million, or about 10 percent of its tobacco revenues, toward these programs, in order to have a substantial effect on reducing smoking rates and tobacco-related death and disease in the state.

Congressman Pallone has repeatedly drawn attention to the risks that tobacco continues to pose to public health. Most recently, he called on the Obama Administration to release stricter rules and regulations regarding the manufacture, distribution, and marketing of Electronic Cigarettes, also known as e-cigarettes. He has expressed serious concern regarding marketing tactics being employed by some e-cigarette companies, which are similar to those previously used by tobacco companies to appeal to younger people, such as through candy flavoring, cartoon images, and event sponsorships.

Below is the full text of the letter:

January 30, 2014

Governor Chris Christie

Office of the Governor

PO Box 001

Trenton, NJ 08625

Dear Governor Christie:

It has come to my attention that New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program has been eliminated, cutting all funding for tobacco control programs. I find it unconscionable that New Jersey ranks last among the 50 states and District of Columbia in meeting the funding levels recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The state collects about \$1 billion each year in tobacco-related revenues, yet it is the only state to dedicate nothing to tobacco prevention and cessation programs in fiscal year 2014.

CDC recommends that New Jersey allocate \$103.3 million, or about 10 percent of its tobacco revenues, toward prevention and cessation programs in order to have a substantial effect on reducing smoking rates and tobacco-related death and disease. Though I recognize that resources are limited and state budgets across the country are tight, it is unacceptable to zero out the funding for tobacco control programs completely.

The economic toll of tobacco use in health expenditures and lost productivity will end up costing New Jerseyans more than front-end investment in prevention. The most recent CDC estimate of medical costs in the state due to smoking is over \$4 billion annually, and about a third of those costs are sustained by Medicaid. In addition, CDC has estimated that smoking contributes to over \$2 billion in lost

productivity costs.

Comprehensive tobacco control programs do work in reducing youth initiation of smoking and tobacco-related death, disease, health care costs, and lost productivity. More than 6,000 children become new daily smokers every year in New Jersey, and over 10,000 adult residents die each year due to smoking. States such as New York and California that have made larger, sustained investments in tobacco control have seen a faster decline in smoking prevalence both in youth and adults as funding for these programs increased.

I urge you not to sacrifice state tobacco prevention programs in an attempt to balance the state budget. Tobacco-related revenues collected by the state should be substantially used for the public health, especially in preventing tobacco use in children and adolescents.

Sincerely,

FRANK PALLONE, JR.

Member of Congress

6th District of New Jersey

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