

Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition

- **Advocacy Action Network**
- **American Cancer Society**
- **American Heart Association**
- **American Lung Association in Kentucky**
- **Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids**
- **Catholic Conference of Kentucky**
- **Kentucky Academy of Family Physicians**
- **Kentucky Chamber of Commerce**
- **Kentucky Equal Justice Center**
- **Kentucky Health Departments Association, Inc.**
- **Kentucky Hospital Association**
- **Kentucky Medical Association**
- **Kentucky Nurses Association**
- **Kentucky Public Health Association**
- **Kentucky Pharmacists Association**
- **Kentucky Voices for Health**
- **Kentucky Youth Advocates**
- **March of Dimes, Kentucky Chapter**
- **Mental Health American of Kentucky**
- **NAMI Kentucky**

January 13, 2010

The Honorable Steve Beshear,
Governor
Commonwealth of Kentucky
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Governor Beshear:

The Kentucky Medicaid Smoking Cessation Coalition thanks you for making a smoking cessation benefit for Medicaid recipients a funding priority in 2010. By committing to this funding during your State of the Commonwealth Address you are offering the 285,000 smokers on Kentucky Medicaid an affordable and effective way to quit smoking.

Under your direction and proactive leadership, Kentucky took a significant step forward in saving lives and money. We understand this was a difficult choice given the Commonwealth's current budget situation. Providing smoking cessation coverage for Kentucky Medicaid recipients is good economic and health policy, benefiting individual patients and Kentucky businesses while helping to improve the long-term financial prosperity of the state.

A comprehensive smoking cessation program will provide Kentucky's Medicaid recipients a proven and affordable way to quit smoking. By offering a wide variety of tools, such as counseling and medications, this program will help thousands of Kentuckians end their tobacco addiction and save health care dollars. This is precisely the common sense measure that is needed to achieve a positive health rating among other states. We applaud you and your administration for recognizing that many people want to quit smoking and simply need help to do so.

In the past year smokers in Kentucky have seen the price of cigarettes increase significantly thanks to new federal (62 cents) and state (30 cents) cigarette tax increases. This offers a real financial reason for kicking the habit—especially for those who can ill afford it. Tobacco use disproportionately affects the poor and uneducated—approximately one-third of adult Medicaid recipients smoke. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, smoking costs the Kentucky Medicaid program nearly \$500 million per year. With unemployment on the rise, Kentucky's Medicaid population has increased dramatically, adding to an existing fiscal and public health crisis.

While tobacco addiction is one of the most difficult to break, thousands quit each year thanks to proven solutions to help people gain freedom from tobacco use. Numerous studies show that motivated people can successfully quit through a combination of smoking cessation medications and brief counseling by a health care provider in person or on the phone.

With Medicaid leading the spending amongst all state expenses, funding a comprehensive smoking cessation program represents a huge investment for long term budget stability. By investing just \$1.5 million state dollars (or .015% of the entire 2009 state budget) into this program, the federal government will kick in another \$3.5 million in matching funds, a small price to pay to help the 70% of Medicaid smokers who report they would like to quit but don't have the means to do so.

We look forward to working with you and the General Assembly to ensure this funding is included in the coming biennial budget.

Sincerely,

