



Legislative Update and ACTION ALERT

February 2, 2011

Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) Threatened!!

**Urge the House and Senate to Protect
this Valuable Preventive Health Resource.**

Vote on Senate Floor Expected Tomorrow.

Today, with little debate, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved [SB 13, Balanced Budget Act of 2011](#). Included in the Proposed Committee Substitute presented in committee today is a provision directing the Health and Wellness Trust Fund to transfer **\$17,045,800** to the General Fund in April 2011. This is an additional \$11,648,800 transfer on top of the \$5,397,000 that HWTF was previously directed to transfer to the General Fund in April. For the current biennial state budget, FY 2009-2011, a total of \$22,045,800 would be diverted to the General Fund from HWTF if this bill is approved by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor.

These proposed cuts will severely affect HWTF's ability to continue operating and funding grants. It should also be noted that due to the General Assembly's previous direction that the HWTF transfer up to 65% of its Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) payments annually to fund debt service on the UNC Cancer Center and other construction projects, the HWTF will receive 0% of the MSA payment (and will, in fact, lose \$397,000) for this fiscal year if this additional transfer is approved.

FY 2010-2011

MSA Payment Projection	\$33,781,880
Debt Service Projection	(\$17,133,080)
Fund diversion proposed in SB13	(\$17,045,800)

The impact of this additional cut will most immediately affect prescription assistance programs including Medication Assistance Program (MAP) and ChecKmeds whose contracts end in June 2011 and are now unlikely to be renewed. These initiatives provide vital access to low or no-cost prescription drugs and medication reviews for seniors and low income adults.

The proposed cuts will also immediately impact any tobacco or obesity prevention initiatives under development. In the area of tobacco prevention, the following statistics should be noted:

- By itself, tobacco use costs North Carolina \$2.4 billion dollars in excess health care costs annually;
- \$769 million in excess health care costs to NC Medicaid are attributable annually to tobacco use.

The Health and Wellness Trust is North Carolina's successful investment to stem that tide. And it is succeeding!

Since 2003, when the HWTF began funding teen tobacco use prevention and cessation efforts (including local programs and an evidence-based, highly effective media campaign), North Carolina has seen the following health benefits:

- Middle school smoking has decreased by 51.6%;
- High school smoking has decreased by 30.4% (North Carolina Youth Tobacco Survey, 2007);
- This translates into **53,000 fewer teen smokers since 2003.**
- **These are the lowest cigarette use rates for middle (4.5%) and high school (19.0%) students ever recorded in our state.**

This is just a sampling of the preventive health successes seen by the work of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund and its grantees and demonstrates what would be lost if this important preventive health resource is lost to our state.

SB 13 is expected to be voted on by the full Senate as soon as TOMORROW, Thursday, February 3.

Because this bill appears to be on a fast track, please contact both your Senator & Representative as soon as possible and urge them to protect the Health and Wellness Trust Fund from further cuts this fiscal year.

How to Contact ANY House or Senate Member to Urge Support for the Health and Wellness Trust Fund:

To email your House and Senate Member, go to the General Assembly's website for email addresses.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the email addresses of Senate members. Find the name of your Senator and double click on the email address.

[CLICK HERE](#) for the email addresses of House members. Find the name of your House member and double click on the email address.

To call your representative or senator, please call 919-733-4111 and ask for your Representative or Senator by name to be transferred.

If you are not sure of the name of your Representative or Senator, check the General Assembly's website at: <http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/GIS/RandR07/Representation.html>

On this page, you may look up your representative or senator by district number, by County, or by Zip Code +4.

For additional information about the North Carolina Alliance for Health, please contact Alliance Executive Director Pam Seamans at pamseamans@nc.rr.com OR Alliance Administrative Assistant Lee Storrow at t-Lee.Storrow@heart.org.

**Or, go to www.ncallianceforhealth.org
for talking points and other resources.**

Call 919-463-8329
or e-mail ncalliance@heart.org for more information

To unsubscribe, please email Lee Storrow at t-Lee.Storrow@heart.org.