North Carolina Alliance for Health

Legislative Update and Action Alert

May 9, 2011

Please read and forward to your colleagues and networks!

Stop the Assault on Preventive Health

Tell Your Senator and the Governor to *SAVE* the Health & Wellness Trust Fund!

Visit the Alliance's new website dedicated to preserving the Health and Wellness Trust Fund. Simply point and click to send a message to your legislators.

www.ncforhealth.org

Email Your Senator TODAY!

And Join the TRU Movement Youth in a "Rally on Raleigh"

Wednesday, May 11 at 4 p.m. (Details Below)

Last week the full House approved its $19.3 billion budget plan (HB 200). As approved, ***the House budget ABOLISHES THE HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND as of December 31, 2011***. Funds from the HWTF would be redirected to debt service (as previous General Assemblies have also done), the University Cancer Research Fund, agricultural projects and MAY BE DIRECTED to a variety of health programs including research, education, prevention, and treatment of health problems, including funding for communities to respond to public health needs through Health Choice and Medicaid. A total of $10 million FOR ONE YEAR ONLY is identified to go to the Department of Public Health (DPH) to split among all of these health needs. However, there is no guarantee that future Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) payments would continue to go to DPH, effectively ending dedicated funding for tobacco use or obesity prevention.

Abolishing the HWTF will eliminate the one meaningful source of funding for tobacco-use and obesity prevention in our state and will set back efforts to improve public health. The HWTF is North Carolina's investment to stem the tide of teen smoking -- and it is succeeding!

The establishment of the HWTF represented a promise that the NC General Assembly made to NC youth to protect them from the harm caused by tobacco use. NC's youth have risen to the challenge and have responded tremendously to the tobacco-use prevention programs and community grants put in place by the HWTF.

Legislators must continue to protect our youth from the harm caused by tobacco use. Don't let NC's historically low youth smoking rates go back up as they have in other states that reduced funding for tobacco use prevention. Since 2003, when the HWTF began funding teen tobacco use prevention and cessation efforts (including local programs and the highly-effective TRU media campaign), the middle school smoking rate in North Carolina has been cut by more than half (from 9.3% to 4.3%), and the high school smoking rate has dropped by a third (from 27.3% to 16.7%).

Similarly, North Carolina is ranked the 11th most overweight and obese state for children. The HWTF has initiated funding for obesity prevention programs over the past few years with the hope of replicating the kind of success achieved in tobacco use prevention. ***Both issues are the top two preventable causes of death and the most critical and pressing health issues facing North Carolina's youth today – and both issues are where the HWTF will be focusing its efforts - if allowed to continue.***

URGENT: Tell Your Senator and the Governor to *SAVE* the Health and Wellness Trust Fund

Abolishing the HWTF will *Set Back* NC Efforts to Improve Public Health and Reduce Teen Smoking Rates - Now the Lowest in NC History!

Contact Information:

To email your Senator, go to **www.ncforhealth.org** to send a message with the click of a button urging legislators to SAVE the Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

To call the Governor: (800) 662-7952 or (919)733-4240

To email the Governor: governor.office@nc.gov

Why Contact the Governor? Because Governor Perdue has the power to veto the budget bill and stop the effort to abolish the Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

Join the TRU Movement Youth in a "Rally on Raleigh"

Wednesday, May 11 at 4 p.m.

An informal group of youth will be rallying in support of the Health and Wellness Trust Fund on this Wednesday, May 11 at 4 p.m. in front of the Legislative Building on Jones Street. Please join them to show your support for the HWTF. For additional information, please contact Alliance staff Lee Storrow at **t-Lee.Storrow@heart.org.**

What MORE can you do to SAVE the Health and Wellness Trust Fund?

1) **VISIT www.ncforhealth.org the Alliance's new website dedicated to preserving the Health and Wellness Trust Fund.** Simply point and click to send a message to your legislators. Forward to friends, family and colleagues so they can also show their support for the Health and Wellness Trust Fund.

2) **Sign the Petition to SAVE the HWTF:** An online petition **http://www.petitionbuzz.com/petitions/savehwtf** is being circulated through Facebook. Sign the petition and show your support! Forward the link to your friends and colleagues.

3) **Write a Letter to the Editor (LTE) to Your Local Paper**
Visit the Alliance website for **sample Letters to the Editor.**

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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.**