



# Pennsylvania Society for Respiratory Care, Inc.

Honorable Tom Corbett  
Governor's Office  
225 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

March 29, 2011

Dear Governor Corbett,

I am writing to you today on behalf of the Pennsylvania Society for Respiratory Care (PSRC), the professional association representing the 7,000 Respiratory Therapists in the Commonwealth.

As you are aware, in 1999 the 'Master Settlement Agreement' was reached with major tobacco manufacturers and was to provide for smoking prevention and smoking cessation programs and other health related programs. Some of these programs include home-care and community-based care, financing for medical equipment, as well as support for the uninsured and catastrophic and uncompensated care.

Recently it has been brought to public attention that once again there is a proposal to raid the Pennsylvania Tobacco Settlement Fund to finance the general budget deficit. While the PSRC understands that the previous administration set precedence for this action, we believe it was wrong to do it the first time and it is wrong to continue to do so!

From an ethical standpoint, the only time we believe diverting funds, especially for use in the general budget, from this fund is appropriate is if the original purpose of the fund no longer exists. The 7,000 respiratory therapists in the Commonwealth can tell you this clearly is not the case for the Tobacco Settlement Fund. COPD, a collection of pulmonary diseases including emphysema and chronic bronchitis, is a major cause of hospital and office visits in Pennsylvania. In fact, according to the CDC, COPD is the third leading cause of death in the United States and the number of cases in Pennsylvania is higher than average. Unfortunately COPD doesn't just turn up like a cold; it generally is years in the making which means there are many COPD patients to be. This means the cost associated for caring for these patients will not decrease anytime soon.

Budgets all across the state are stretched, and closing gaps is becoming more and more difficult. In healthcare, we are being asked to do more with less. Tough decisions that were once easily solved by borrowing or reapportioning money can no longer be solved that way. We believe that diverting money from the Tobacco Settlement Fund will reduce or eliminate funding of programs such as smoking cessation courses and public education on the effects of smoking...the types of programs for which the fund was meant to support! If the fund is used correctly, the cost and mortality rate associated with COPD can be dramatically reduced. If, however, the money in the fund continues to be used for things not even remotely associated with smoking, then a great injustice will have been served on the citizens of the commonwealth.

For our patients as well as the impact on the healthcare industry, I strongly urge you to reconsider the decision to divert money from this fund in an effort to close the general budget deficit. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Mosakowski".

Steve Mosakowski MBA, RRT-NPS, CPFT  
2011 PSRC President

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cc: House and Senate Leaders