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Proposed cuts to New Jersey's tobacco control programs will increase teen smoking, healthcare costs

12. May 2010 07:49

Proposed cuts to New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program may raise teen smoking and will increase costs to the state in the long run, said a former New Jersey health commissioner today.

"New Jersey's tobacco control programs have helped cut teen and adult smoking in recent years, but nationally there has been an upswing in teen use of other tobacco products," said Fred M. Jacobs, MD, chairman of New Jersey Breathes, a coalition of anti-tobacco organizations. Jacobs is a former New Jersey Commissioner of the Department of Health and Senior Services.

"New Jersey teens smoke over 90 million cigarettes a year," said Dr. Jacobs. "Continued investment by the state is necessary if we are to reduce this smoking rate and maintain it. Reduced expenditures in other states have led to increases in both teen and adult smoking, and there's no reason to think that New Jersey would be any different."

New Jersey's Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) was established in 2001, with \$32.5 million in funding from the Master Settlement Agreement reached by state Attorneys General with the nation's tobacco companies. Governor Chris Christie has proposed the elimination of \$7.1 million in state funding in the fiscal year 2011 budget.

"New Jersey may lose up to \$52.5 million in federal anti-tobacco funding if the state eliminates this program," said Jacobs. "State health officials can't expect successful teen anti-smoking programs and smoking cessation treatment programs to continue to run with federal funds that may disappear if state funding goes away."

Jacobs said that in addition to the investment in improved health, New Jersey is als

helping reduce tobacco-related expenses in the state. "Each smoker costs New Jersey about \$6,000 annually in healthcare costs and lost productivity, and every New Jersey household pays \$660 additional per year in state and federal taxes to cover the government-related costs of smoking. If our governor and legislature are serious about tax reduction, they have to consider the total costs associated with smoking."

SOURCE New Jersey BREATHES

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