

Media Release



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American Lung Association Report Grades State Tobacco Control Activities

Maryland Fares Poorly; Must Make Tobacco Control a Public Health Priority

January 9, 2007, Hunt Valley, Maryland – Despite the fact that nearly 14,000 people die in Maryland from smoking-related diseases each year, state policymakers have not adopted strong, comprehensive policies to adequately protect citizens from the ravages of tobacco use, according to the 5th Annual *American Lung Association State of Tobacco Control* report released today.

Release of the report, available at www.marylandlung.org, is timely in that the Maryland legislature, whose session starts January 10, will likely be reviewing legislation on many aspects of tobacco control policies including clean indoor air, the Cigarette Restitution Fund defense and a proposed increase in the tobacco tax.

The report gave Maryland the following grades:

- Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending, *Grade: D*
- Smokefree Air, *Grade: B*
- Cigarette Tax, *Grade: C*
- Youth Access to Tobacco Products, *Grade: F*

The grade for Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending is determined by the percentage of funding a state allocates to comprehensive tobacco control programs as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The CDC's minimum spending requirement for Maryland, as determined in their Best Practices guidance document, is just over \$30 million. The Maryland FY 2007 appropriations were just over \$19.9 million. That amount—65 percent—earns Maryland a grade of “D” for Tobacco Prevention and Control Spending.

The grades for the Smokefree Air category are based on scoring smokefree indoor air in nine different categories such as schools, childcare facilities, restaurants, bars, retail stores and other public places. Since Maryland laws restrict or ban smoking in most workplace and public areas, the score was a “B.” However, it is important to note that Maryland has only four counties that prohibit smoking in bars and restaurants and legislation is needed to protect all Marylanders from the dangers of secondhand smoke in these venues.

The Cigarette Excise Tax score is based on the national average tax per pack of \$1.00. Maryland's cigarette tax is just that—\$1.00—earning a “C” grade. As the price of cigarettes increases, consumption decreases. For each 10 percent price increase, consumption drops by about seven percent for youths and four percent for adults. The Maryland legislature will have the opportunity to double that tax to \$2.00 during this session, helping offset the estimated \$7.18 per pack the CDC reports is spent in health care and related expenditures.

The Youth Access category measures laws designed to discourage young people from accessing tobacco products of any kind and scores states in areas such as having minimum age requirements, requiring photo ID, sales via vending machines and other means of access. Maryland scored an “F” in this category due to a lack of enforcement, inspections, clerk intervention in sales and no requirement for photographic identification for people appearing to be under the age of 21.

“We need to be vigilant about protecting Maryland's children from the dangers of tobacco and the best way to do that is through funding prevention programs and by increasing the tobacco tax,” says Stephen M. Peregoy, President & CEO of the American Lung Association of Maryland

“The American Lung Association of Maryland urges the state legislature as they embark on their new session tomorrow to consider the benefit for all Marylanders in passing tougher tobacco laws. Maryland has fallen behind on making public health a priority by not having tighter tobacco control measures and not funding prevention programs at the level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control,” he said.

Other Major Findings

The Lung Association report also notes that –

- A record 26 states and the District of Columbia earned passing grades (“C” or better) for having laws that make workplaces free of tobacco smoke. Unfortunately, another 23 states received “F” grades in that category.
- Cigarette taxes rose in eight states in 2006. New Jersey now has the highest tax at \$2.575 per pack and the national average has risen to \$1.00 per pack.
- While overall funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs increased in 2006, 34 states received “F” grades for the amount they spend to help people avoid smoking or quit. Only nine states received “A” grades for spending a significant amount on smoking prevention and cessation, up from six states in 2005.

The American Lung Association of Maryland is the leading organization in Maryland working to prevent lung disease and promote lung health. With the generous support of the public, the American Lung Association of Maryland is “Improving life, one breath at a time.” For more information about the American Lung Association of Maryland or to support the work it does, call 1-800-642-1184 or log on to www.marylandlung.org