

Alliance for a Healthy New England

Date

Recipient's Name
Recipient's Title
Company Name
Street Address
City, State, Zip

Dear _____:

We are writing to ask for your support for a unique campaign that will save thousands of lives in New England by addressing two critical health issues: tobacco use and access to health care.

The American Cancer Society, Community Catalyst, the Council of New England State Medical Societies, other voluntary health organizations, and health care and tobacco control advocates have joined together to create the Alliance for a Healthy New England. The goal of the Alliance is to increase tobacco excise taxes by 50¢ in each of the six New England states in order to decrease tobacco use and improved health access. Uniformly increased taxes throughout New England will remove the option for consumers to travel to nearby states with lower tobacco taxes to purchase cheaper cigarettes.

The Alliance for a Healthy New England is key to this campaign. This New England-wide coalition will provide a consistent anti-tobacco message and strong advocacy to expand health care access, and insure the successful passage of tobacco tax increases in all six states. The impact of tobacco on the public health is undeniable: each day 61 people in New England die prematurely from smoking related illnesses. That works out to be more than 21,000 people each year. Increasing the tobacco excise taxes will deter smoking initiation among youth, prompt smoking cessation among adults, and reduce the average cigarette consumption among continuing smokers. In fact, youth, minorities, and low-income smokers are two to three times more likely to quit or smoke less than other smokers in response to price increases.

The tobacco tax increases will also increase access to health care and promote public health in all six New England States. Currently there are more than 1.5 million New England residents who are without health insurance, and thousands more who are under-insured.

Individual state coalitions will develop their own specific health care proposals for the revenue increase that address the specific health access and tobacco control needs in the state. These coalitions provide an important opportunity to demonstrate the power of bringing together consumers, providers, and the American Cancer Society to address important health issues and to build grassroots support for an increased tobacco tax and expanded health access. This New England campaign is already serving as a national model for health access expansion.

Tobacco control and access to health care are a politically powerful combination, and there is precedent in New England for collaborating on tobacco excise tax campaigns for these goals. Today we need both your financial and political support for this campaign. We are confident that by joining together in this initiative, we can reach a permanent solution to the lack of affordable health care and the predominance of tobacco use in our region. We will be contacting you in the future for your support. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Gudaitis
Chief Executive Officer
American Cancer Society
New England Division

Robert Restuccia
Executive Director
Community Catalyst