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**New York Children Would Benefit from President’s Plan to Expand Early Education**

**With Tobacco Tax Increase, New Report Shows**

NEW YORK, NY– President Obama has proposed to expand early childhood education and fund it with an increase in federal tobacco taxes.  In New York State, this initiative would provide 16,453 more children from low- and moderate-income families with access to high-quality preschool in the first year alone and prevent 55,500 kids from becoming addicted smokers, according to a report released today by nine organizations that focus on early learning and/or public health.

Additional New York benefits include:

· Additional funds provided for preschool in the first year: $134.6 million

· Residents saved from premature, smoking-caused deaths: 31,800

In his fiscal year 2014 budget, President Obama proposed to expand federal funding for early education programs, paid for with a 94-cent per pack increase in the federal cigarette tax and a proportional increase in the federal tax on other tobacco products.  “Taken together, these two measures would help ensure a future of smart, healthy kids nationwide and in every state,” the report concludes.

The report can be found at [www.smarthealthykids.org](http://www.smarthealthykids.org/).  It details the educational and health benefits of the President’s proposal nationwide and in every state.

Nationwide, the President’s proposal would ensure that two million children in low- and moderate-income families have access to high-quality preschool and prevent 1.7 million kids from becoming addicted smokers.

"More than half of high needs children, and disproportionately children of color, are shut out of public preschool in New York. This proposal will not only help keep kids from a path of serious disease and premature death from tobacco use, but make investments in early education that are critical to level the playing field and provide children with the strong start they need to survive and thrive,” said**Melanie Hartzog, Executive Director of the Children’s Defense Fund of NY.**

“This proposal is a win-win for New York and the country,” said **Michele Bonan, Regional Advocacy Director for ACS CAN**.  “It gives children the early educational foundation they need, decreases the smoking rate and benefits the entire country by reducing the burden of tobacco use--the leading cause of cancer deaths in New York and the country.”

"The President's early learning proposal is smart, bold and comprehensive," said **Nancy Kolben, Executive Director of Center for Children's Initiatives**. "The evidence shows early education is a launchpad to success. And paying for the services with a tobacco tax ensures they will be healthy, too!"

"The American Heart Association is supportive of the proposed increase to the federal tobacco tax as smoking is the leading preventable cause of heart disease and stroke" said **Robin Vitale, Senior Director of Government Relations for the American Heart Association**. “The science is unwavering--every time a tobacco tax is implemented, we see a direct result in more adults quitting and fewer young people becoming addicted. We look forward to strong support from New York's congressional delegation and hope that Senators Schumer and Gillibrand lend their leadership toward approving this expeditiously."

“Expanding access to early childhood education while simultaneously reducing smoking is a win-win for New York’s children.  With only 27% of NYC’s low-income children having access to early childhood programs, we strongly support President Obama’s plan to increase access to high-quality preschool programs, said **Stephanie Gendell, Associate Executive Director, Policy and Government Relations of Citizens’ Committee for Children.**

“President Obama’s proposal to increase the federal excise tax on tobacco would spare more of our kids from a deadly addiction that could cost them their lives,” said **Michael Seilback, Vice President, Public Policy & Communications of the American Lung Association in New York.** “We strongly support this proposal which would not only reduce tobacco-caused lung disease, but prevent 55,500 kids from becoming addicted to tobacco.”

“Too many New York City families in the neighborhoods served by Children’s Aid struggle to find affordable, high-quality early childhood programs that give children the foundation they need to be ready for kindergarten," said **Richard R. Buery, President and CEO of The Children's Aid Society.** "The President’s early learning initiative, funded by a tobacco tax, will increase our ability to put children on the pathway to academic success and demonstrate our commitment as a nation to raising smart, healthy children. It’s the right thing to do.”

“Quality early education lays the foundation for lifelong health and learning,” said**Liz Isakson, MD, Co-director of Docs for Tots**. “That is why this proposed legislation is so important - leveraging a tobacco tax to pay for an investment in our country's future health and success is smart policy.”

"Many children are left behind before they even start kindergarten,” said **Jasmine Gripper, Early Childhood Campaign Coordinator of Alliance for Quality Education.** “With access to high-quality early childhood education, we have a chance to close the achievement gap and ensure all students start their first day of kindergarten prepared to succeed. A tobacco tax to pay for early childhood education makes sense for our children, our economy and our future."

“Research shows that increasing taxes reduces youth smoking.  We support President Obama for taking bold action to protect our children from tobacco addiction and save lives,” said **Sheelah Feinberg, Executive Director of the NYC Coalition for a Smoke-Free City.**  “We support all policies that will help to save children from a lifetime of nicotine addiction.”

“This report powerfully demonstrates the multiple ways in which our children would benefit from the President’s proposal to expand early education with revenue from a tobacco tax increase.  This proposal would provide millions of kids with a strong start in life, while helping them live longer, healthier lives free of tobacco addiction,” said **Susan M. Liss, Executive Director of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.**

National organizations releasing the report are the National Women’s Law Center, Save the Children, MomsRising, Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, American Heart Association, American Lung Association and American Academy of Pediatrics.

**Background**

The President’s proposal would address two major challenges facing America’s children: Too few have access to high-quality preschool programs, while too many still smoke.

Less than half of four-year-olds are currently enrolled in public preschool programs, and many of these programs are not high quality.  Numerous studies show that children who have a high-quality preschool experience perform better on cognitive tests in elementary and secondary school, are more likely to graduate from high school, go to college, be employed and be in good health, and are less likely to become involved with crime or have to rely on public assistance.

The proposed increase in tobacco taxes would significantly reduce smoking and other tobacco use, which is the nation’s leading preventable cause of death.  Tobacco use kills more than 400,000 Americans every year and costs the nation $96 billion in health care bills.  Every day, more than 3,500 U.S. youth try their first cigarette.

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