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NJBreathes

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NEW JERSEY POISED TO WIN “RACE TO THE BOTTOM” IN STATE ANTI-TOBACCO FUNDING

Trenton, NJ – June 10, 2010 – New Jersey is poised to rank 50th out of the 50 states in state funding for tobacco control programs, said state public health leaders at a Trenton press conference today. Speakers from New Jersey Breathes, a coalition of anti tobacco groups, said that the loss of all state funds for the Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program (CTCP) will endanger lives and cost New Jersey taxpayers much more in long-term healthcare costs.

“New Jersey’s state funding for tobacco control programs has declined over the past few years, and we are now potentially dead last in state funding,” said Fred M. Jacobs, MD, JD, and Chairman, NJ Breathes. Jacobs is a former Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services. “New Jersey should be a leader in the public health arena, instead of vying for the dubious distinction of ranking lowest of any state in the country in funding tobacco prevention and control. We’re winning the ‘race to the bottom,’ and it will cost New Jersey in both lives and dollars.”

Jacobs made his remarks at a press conference in the State House that featured leaders from NJ REBEL (Reaching Everyone by Exposing Lies) and directors and patients from Quitcenters, the state-funded smoking cessation clinics.

"After only 8 years of NJ QuitCenters, QuitLine, and QuitNet, the percent of ever-smokers who have quit in NJ jumped 10 percentage points. During the same time period, states like Mississippi and Tennessee - who woefully underfunded their tobacco programs - barely changed at all," said Marc L. Steinberg, Ph.D., Director of the Mercer County Tobacco Dependence Program. "Data from other states who have lost funding indicate that if our comprehensive tobacco control program is eliminated, our impressive achievements will regress."

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“Each year, 19,700 New Jersey teens under 18 become daily smokers,” said Ben Ross, former chairman of NJ REBEL and creator of “regeneration,” a healthy lifestyle production for young adults. “That’s 54 teens a day who will become addicted to smoking. Since each smoker costs New Jersey almost \$6,000 each year in healthcare costs and lost productivity, that’s over \$100 million annually in costs to the New Jersey taxpayers. Failure to fund NJ REBEL programs may increase the number of teen smokers, and increase the healthcare costs to the state as well.”

New Jersey BREATHEs is an independent, collective voice for tobacco control convened by the Institute of Medicine & Public Health of New Jersey. More than 45 leading state, health, non-profit and civic organizations participate in the coalition. New Jersey BREATHEs seeks to reduce tobacco use and drive down smoking rates, especially among children. More information is available at www.njbreathe.org.

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