

AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION® IN SOUTH CAROLINA

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June Deen
Director of Advocacy
in Georgia and
South Carolina

May 7, 2010

The Honorable Clementa Pinckney
512 Gressette Bldg.
Columbia, SC 29201

RE: Senate Bill 1378

Dear Senator Pinckney:

The American Lung Association is pleased to support Senate Bill 1378. Tobacco use continues to be the leading preventative cause of death and illness in South Carolina. Smoking kills more than 6,000 South Carolinians each year. These deaths represent friends and family. Smokers often need help to quit smoking and should have access to evidence-based treatments, such as cessation therapy and counseling services.

As you know, smoking-related disease is a fiscal burden to the state. Helping people stop smoking can reduce these costs. For example: In 2008, the Oklahoma State Department of Health offered tobacco cessation assistance to state employees. An estimated 570 state employees quit smoking the first 6 months, resulting in about \$2.2 million in annual savings, or \$3,800 per successful quitter, through reduced health care costs and increased employee productivity (savings reflects latest health care costs and productivity estimates). The state's costs in providing the expanded coverage totaled about \$367,000, or \$148 per recipient.

We applaud South Carolina for offering tobacco cessation assistance to state employees and Medicaid recipients and would like private health plans to follow your great example.

U.S. Public Health Service guidelines recommend tobacco cessation treatments should be covered by public and private health benefit plans. Having access to quit-smoking options makes smokers more likely to make a quit attempt – and most importantly – to succeed. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that health plans do the following:

- Cover at least four counseling sessions of at least 30 minutes each, including telephone and individual counseling sessions.
- Cover both prescription medication and over-the-counter nicotine replacement treatments.
- Provide counseling and medication coverage for at least two tobacco cessation attempts per year.
- Eliminate or minimize co-pays or deductibles for counseling and medications.

Senate Bill 1378 requires health care service plan contracts and health insurance policies to include coverage for tobacco cessation services. This bill reinforces and furthers the American Lung Association's commitment to a healthy, tobacco-free America. It also ensures that this population would receive quality, comprehensive smoking cessation services to combat this dangerous addiction, resulting in economic savings for South Carolina.

Sincerely,



June Deen, Director of Advocacy

CC: Members of the Senate Insurance and Banking Committee