

# Impact of Tobacco in West Virginia: The Need to Invest in Tobacco Control to Reduce Taxpayer Costs, Protect Kids, and Save Lives

## Health Costs of Tobacco to West Virginia

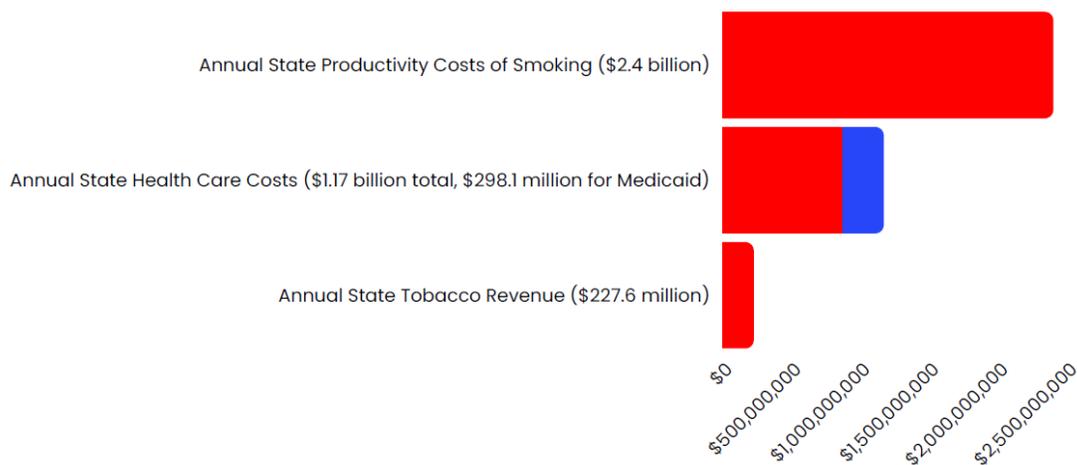
Tobacco is an addictive and deadly product. Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body<sup>i</sup> and remains the number one cause of preventable death. In West Virginia:

- 21% of adults smoke cigarettes, the highest adult smoking rate in the nation.<sup>ii</sup>
- 27% of high school students use tobacco products including 3.8% who smoke cigarettes, 27.5% who use e-cigarettes, and 2.5% who use smokeless tobacco.<sup>iii</sup>
- 37.8% of cancer deaths are caused by smoking.<sup>iv</sup>

## Economic Costs of Tobacco to West Virginia

Smoking is estimated to cost West Virginia \$1.17 billion in direct health care costs, including \$298.1 million in Medicaid costs annually.<sup>v</sup> Additionally, smoking costs the state \$2.4 billion in productivity costs annually. These costs far outpace the \$227.6 million in annual tobacco revenue the state receives from tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes. On average, West Virginia residents pay \$1,574 per household in state and federal taxes from smoking-caused government expenditures, whether they smoke or not. **It is vital that fact-based programs are in place to reduce tobacco use and reduce taxpayer-funded health care costs.**

## West Virginia



## Investment in West Virginia's Youth

West Virginia receives \$227.6 million in tobacco revenue annually from tobacco settlement payments and taxes combined, yet currently invests only \$451,404 in tobacco prevention and cessation programs, which is only 1.6% of the \$27.4 million the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that West Virginia spend to combat the health and economic consequences of tobacco. Increasing funding is a vital first step to protect our West Virginia youth from the dangers of tobacco.

## Countering Tobacco Industry Marketing

A well-funded fact-based tobacco control program is needed to counteract the \$106.2 million per year that tobacco companies are spending to market their deadly and addictive products in West Virginia.<sup>vi</sup> Increased funding is needed to negate the influence Big Tobacco's marketing has on youth. As Big Tobacco has been working hard to addict future generations with e-cigarettes and other tobacco products, the need for funding for tobacco prevention programs has never been greater.

### The Solution:

#### Investments in Fact-Based Tobacco Control Programs & Increased Tobacco Taxes

**ACS CAN urges West Virginia lawmakers to increase funding for the Division of Tobacco Prevention to \$16.5 million to prevent kids from starting to use tobacco and help people already addicted to tobacco quit.** The impact to youth smoking from this increase would prevent 3,100 kids in West Virginia from growing up to be adults who smoke and would ultimately save the state \$49.6 million in future health care expenditures.<sup>vii</sup> Our state will see additional health and economic benefits from the impact of this funding increase on adults. Overall, for every \$1 spent on comprehensive tobacco control programs, states receive up to \$55 in savings from averted tobacco-related health care costs.<sup>viii</sup> ACS CAN calls on West Virginia to increase tobacco control funding in the following ways in order to reduce taxpayer costs, protect kids, and save lives:

- Support House Bill 4983 to create a Tobacco Cessation Special Revenue Account.
- Include \$16.5 million in increased tobacco control funding in the state budget, Senate Bill 200 and House Bill 4025.

#### ACS CAN calls on West Virginia lawmakers to significantly increase tobacco taxes to reduce health care costs, protect kids, and save lives.

- Increasing West Virginia's cigarette tax by \$1.50 per pack would generate \$98.51 million in new annual revenue for the state as well as prevent 2,400 kids under 18 from becoming adults who smoke, help 9,600 adults who currently smoke quit, and save 3,000 lives. It would also provide \$149 million in long-term health care cost savings from adult and youth smoking declines.
- Increasing the tax on all other tobacco products, including e-cigarettes, at the same time would produce additional health and economic benefits for West Virginia. It is important that tax increases apply to all tobacco products at an equivalent rate to encourage people to quit rather than switch to a cheaper product and to prevent youth from starting to use any tobacco product.

**Together we can create a cleaner, safer, healthier West Virginia  
by increasing tobacco taxes and investing in the health of our state.**

<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking. Updated April 28, 2020.

[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/)

<sup>ii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2021 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

<https://www.cdc.gov/brfss/brfssprevalence/index.html>

<sup>iii</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/results.htm>

<sup>iv</sup> Smoking-Related Cancer Deaths in 2020 Analysis by ACS, 2023

<sup>v</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in West Virginia. Updated 11.21.23. [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/west\\_virginia](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/west_virginia)

<sup>vi</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in West Virginia. Updated 11.21.23. [https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/west\\_virginia](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/west_virginia)

<sup>vii</sup> Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Impact on Youth Smoking, Deaths & Related Health Costs from Changes to West Virginia Tobacco Prevention Funding. Updated January 23, 2024.

<sup>viii</sup> Office on Smoking and Health at a Glance, retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/aag/tobacco-use.htm>.