



**Testimony in Support of SB 684
An Act to Restore the Trust by Re-establishing the Voter Mandated Health
Protection Fund and the Tobacco Settlement Fund**

September 7, 2005

Thank you, Chairwoman Fargo, Chairman Koutoujian, and the members of the committee, for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 684.

The Massachusetts Public Health Association is a non-profit statewide organization whose mission is to advocate for policies and programs that protect public health in Commonwealth. Our members include nurses, academics, scientists, community health workers, and other concerned residents.

The social and economic benefits of public health are well-known: investing in public health saves lives, reduces illness and injury, prevents costly medical expenses, and keeps children in school and adults at work.

That this statement applies to tobacco prevention and control is well-proven, well-documented, and well-understood. Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death in Massachusetts. Smoking costs the Commonwealth \$2.7 billion in annual health care and another \$813 million in lost productivity.

Between fiscal years 2002 and 2004, total funding for the Department of Public Health was slashed by almost one-third. The single most devastating cut was to DPH's Tobacco Control Program, which was reduced by more than 95 percent. Since the cuts, illegal sales of tobacco to youth have soared and smoking is increasing among young adults.

Yet the money is there for tobacco prevention and control: approximately \$700 million a year flows into the state treasury from the tobacco tax and the tobacco settlement. This legislation does not ask for all of that money, simply no less than the CDC-recommended funding level for a state our size, at least \$35 million.

Moreover, it is worth noting that re-establishing the Health Protection Fund and the Tobacco Settlement Fund will provide a pool of funding to help pay for other critical public health needs, such as school nurses and additional disease prevention programs.

Ninety percent of longtime smokers are addicted by the age of 18. With education and enforcement, we can throw a wrench into the tobacco industry's business plan. For the sake of our current generation of kids, and the many more to come, we urge you to restore the funding for tobacco control.