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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS *of New York State*

JOINT LEGISLATIVE BUDGET HEARINGS 2013-2014 EXECUTIVE BUDGET PROPOSAL - HEALTH / MEDICAID JANUARY 30, 2013

These comments are submitted on behalf of the League of Women Voters of New York State. The League is a non-partisan organization which encourages informed and active involvement in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. The League of Women Voters has more than fifty local Leagues statewide.

In relation to healthcare issues, The League supports measures that: expand access to basic levels of health care; ensure parity for mental health care; support disease prevention and promotion of the public's health; and support patient self-determination.

We wish to focus these comments on one issue of significance.

The League is deeply concerned that the Executive Budget Proposal eliminates the vast majority of the funding dedicated to the Tobacco Control Program. The Governor's proposal will consolidate numerous prevention programs into a competitive pool, however it is unclear how much, if any, will be invested in the Tobacco Control Program.

Smoking is a major risk factor for heart disease and cancer and lung cancer is the number one cancer killer, accounting for a quarter of all cancer deaths. The Tobacco Control Program has a successful track-record of reducing the number of adults and children who smoke. Medicaid and other health costs caused by smoking-related disease totals in the billions of dollars annually and cutting the state's program that reduces tobacco use rates, and thus the associated medical costs, is supremely short-sighted.

Before the Executive Budget was released, the League joined with other civic and public health organizations, to express our concern about the severe health impacts of smoking and tobacco use on New Yorkers and their families. We urged the Governor to fully fund New York's Tobacco Control Program in the 2013-2014 Executive Budget.

The provisions that have been included in the Executive Budget in relation to the Tobacco Control Program are alarming.

The League of Women Voters urges the Legislature to *directly* and fully fund the Tobacco Control Program at \$85 million, the level that maximized its ability to accomplish its mission.

We would like to thank you for your attention. The League will continue to monitor the budget process for transparency. We will also continue to advocate for initiatives that support the League's positions on equity, quality, access, and prevention.