 2021 *Week of Advocacy*

**Lift the Burden of Heart Disease and Stroke**

**ASK: Please raise the cigarette tax by $1 and establish tax parity with other tobacco products including e-cigarettes and cigars.**

* + **Fact:** The World Health Organization stated that smokers are likely more vulnerable to severe and potentially life-threatening cases of COVID-19.

* + **Fact:** Most tobacco taxes haven’t been raised in **10** years meaning the rate has gone stale and no longer deters use like it should. In 2014, the Surgeon General called raising prices on cigarettes “one of the most effective tobacco control interventions” because increasing price is proven to reduce smoking, especially among kids.
	+ **Facts:** A $1 cigarette tax would keep 22,200 youth from using tobacco, help 53,900 adults quit, and would generate $38.8M in new revenue. These estimates don’t account for the public health and economic benefits that would come with tax parity for other tobacco products, so they are likely to be greater. (Projections done by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids and the American Cancer Society- Cancer Action Network.)
	+ **Fact:** A portion of the new revenue from the tax should be used to fund the state’s Tobacco Control Program which runs the Quit Line, provides nicotine replacement therapies, and promotes community-based initiatives around smoking cessation. This will help undo years of damage done by Big Tobacco resulting in higher rates of tobacco use among Black, Latinx, and New Yorker’s reporting poor mental health.

* + **Fact:**  While we have legislation supporting a tobacco tax, we don’t want to wait, we’d like to see this passed as soon as possible. That’s why we’re pushing this to be done in the budget. Please include tobacco taxes in your one house budget. S8330 Stavisky / A10418 Rosenthal, raises the cigarette tax and S84 Hoylman/ A11123 Rosenthal, establishes tax parity.
	+ **Note:** The current tax rate for cigarettes is $4.35 (additional $1.50 in NYC) and 20% of the retail sale price for e-cigarettes.

**ASK: Please restore the funding cut by Governor Cuomo to the state’s public health programs in your one house budgets. Specifically funding for the Obesity Prevention Program ($5.9M requested) and the Healthy Heart/ Hypertension Program ($692,000 requested).**

* + **Fact:** Given the link between COVID-19 and underlying cardiovascular conditions, patients with existing cardiovascular disease or CVD risk factors including obesity, diabetes, and hypertension, may be at higher risk for serious complications from COVID-19, including death.
	+ **Fact**: The only programs to help prevent these chronic diseases have been cut in the Governor’s Executive Budget. They were already operating on bare bones budgets. We know that prevention is key when it comes to dealing with chronic diseases. If these programs do not have the funds they need to operate effectively then we are subjecting New Yorkers to unnecessary suffering.
	+ **Fact:** Among NY adults, the obesity rate is 27.6%, and 14.4% among youth, both of which have been stagnant, indicating more needs to be done. The breakdown of obesity by race shows a disparity: 25.7% white, 34.1% Black, and 29.4% Latinx. 1,634,000, or 10.5% of the adult population has diabetes
	+ **Fact:** These programs work in the community, schools, and workplaces implementing programs to control and reduce the major risk factors associated with CVD.
		- Schools: 82 districts, 551 buildings, estimated reach – 500,000 students
		- Communities: 245, estimated reach – 4.6 million individuals

* + **Fact:** The cuts to these programs do not produce big savings but they do damage short term and long-term health is detrimental. An upfront investment in prevention saves lives and money.

* + **Fact:** Bottom line, we know NYS is struggling fiscally, but these programs save lives and money. Prevention is key, especially now. While in the throes of a global health crisis, we should not be defunding programs that reduce the morbidity and mortality of chronic diseases.
	+ **Note**: AHA does not receive any of these funds.

**ASK: Please help expand access to healthy fruits and vegetables by funding the Double Up Food Bucks program, a SNAP incentive program.**

* + **Fact:** 2.4 million New Yorkers struggle to afford all the food that they need, and we know COVID has only increased this number. 32% of these New Yorkers are children. Under the federal government’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), exists the Double Up Food Bucks program. SNAP incentive programs like Double Up helps New Yorkers by matching SNAP benefits dollar for dollar up to $20 a day for purchases of local fruits & vegetables.
	+ **Fact:** SNAP incentive programs, like Double up can increase spending on fruits and vegetables in grocery stores, which generates economic growth. On average, every $5 spent using SNAP generates as much as $9 in economic activity. These incentives have decreased the purchasing of empty-calorie foods such as cookies, chips, and candy.
	+ **Fact:** 96% of Double Up customers said their families are eating more fruits and vegetables and Double Up is active at more than 100 sites across New York. In order to continue growing, the program needs funding.

* + **Fact:** Double Up is a win-win-win: more healthy food for families, better business for farmers, and a boost for local economies.