



# California Tobacco Control Alliance

## STATEMENT OF SUPPORT AND ENDORSEMENT Senate Bill 576 (Ortiz)

We, the undersigned, support SB 576 (Ortiz) requiring comprehensive tobacco cessation benefits in all California health insurance products. We believe this is a vital element to be added to California's successful tobacco control programs.

### The Problem

For more than a decade, prevention and education programs have changed the social norm around smoking in California. As a result, smoking is less acceptable, less accessible and less desirable. Despite California's low prevalence rate in comparison to the rest of the country, one in eight smokers lives in California. The percentage of smokers in California making a quit attempt increased from 25% in 1990 to 61.5% in 1999. Unfortunately, those attempts have not led to an increased rate of successful quitting. Given the relatively flat smoking prevalence, it is clear that a new strategy is needed to help the state's four million smokers quit.

### The Solution

More reliable access to tobacco dependence treatments - medications and behavioral treatment programs - is critical for smokers to be successful in quitting. Although more than 70% of smokers visit a physician at least once a year, only 31% of California smokers report that they received advice to quit and a referral to help them do so from their health care provider. *Without support or health care services, long-term success rates for smokers attempting to quit are only about 5%.* Treating tobacco dependence has been deemed the "gold standard" of preventive interventions - and can be provided for as little as \$.25 per member/per month.

When California's health insurance companies collaborate to cover uniform cessation benefits in standard health insurance packages, everyone wins:

- Health insurers benefit by leveling the playing field and eliminating disincentives for one plan to invest in preventive care programs that its competitors avoid;
- Health professionals benefit by being able to reliably deliver and recommend effective, evidence-based treatments to all patients, across all health insurance carriers;
- Smokers benefit by having access to treatments that significantly improve their success quit attempts; and
- All health care consumers in California benefit by saving money and saving lives when more smokers quit.

Therefore, we endorse the efforts to increase access to tobacco cessation services. Count on our organization to: (please check all that apply)

- Authorize the use of our name and logo as a co-sponsor of the mandate legislation.
- Write a letter of support to the legislative committee hearing the bill.
- Share information about the need for universal coverage of tobacco dependence treatment in communications to our members including newsletters, email alerts, electronic updates, meeting materials, etc.
- Share our membership mailing lists with the Alliance.
- Work with the Alliance to mobilize our members to take action as part of the campaign.
- Provide spokespersons for the campaign in the following locations: \_\_\_\_\_

Mariana S.B. Webb  
Signature

4/20/05  
Date

Mariana S.B. Webb, M.S. Executive Director  
Printed Name and Title

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**Please fax completed form to Ann Gouré at 916.447.6931. Thank you!**