

January 22, 2004

The Honorable Jeb Bush
Office of the Governor
The Capitol
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Dear Governor Bush:

We are writing to you as national leaders of America's faith community on behalf of our clergy and lay members in Florida to strongly urge you to fully fund a comprehensive tobacco prevention program. When Florida and other states entered into historic settlement agreements with the tobacco companies, state leaders pledged to use the money coming from the tobacco companies to adequately fund programs that work to reduce tobacco use. We in the faith community believe state leaders have a moral obligation to keep that pledge in order to save countless lives from the horrors of tobacco-caused death and illness.

As you know, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has determined that Florida should spend at least \$78.4 million per year to fund an effective, comprehensive tobacco prevention program. This would be 9.3% of the \$840 million that Florida collects every year in tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes. Yet, we are concerned to learn from a Report recently issued by the Campaign For Tobacco Free Kids that Florida actually spends only \$1 million per year on tobacco prevention, which is .1% of the money coming to you from tobacco settlement payments and tobacco taxes.

Our clergy spends much too much time burying mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers who die an untimely and grueling death because they became addicted to tobacco when they were young. We know all too well how the tobacco companies have spent, and continue to spend, hundreds of millions of dollars to addict young and old to this deadly product. We also know that states can reduce this addiction, particularly among vulnerable children, by fully funding tobacco prevention programs designed by the CDC. For our children's sake, we urge you to do so.

This year is the fortieth anniversary of the landmark Surgeon General's Report that opened everyone's eyes to the horrors of tobacco addiction. Though we have made some

progress in reducing tobacco use in this country, there are still too many who smoke, and far too many teenagers who become addicted to tobacco. We urge you to save as many children as possible from this addiction by adequately funding tobacco prevention programs at CDC levels.

Faith leaders in Florida are also publicly announcing their strong agreement with our statement here. They will be making sure that their congregants across your state know how important it is that tobacco prevention programs be adequately funded. We hope and pray that you listen to their call.

James Winkler, General Secretary
General Board of Church and Society
United Methodist Church

Bishop Henry Williamson,
Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

Dr. DeWitt Williams, Director
Health Ministries, North American Division
Seventh Day Adventists

Sarah Ward, President
Woman's Christian Temperance Union

Dr. Sayyid M. Syeed
Secretary General
Islamic Society of North America

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director
Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Dr. Tyrone S. Pitts, General Secretary
Progressive National Baptist Convention

Rev. Deborah L. Patterson, Executive Director
International Parish Nurse Resource Center

Rev. Kristina Peterson, Global Action Chair
Church Women United

Phillip Jones, Director
Brethren Witness/Washington Office,
Church of the Brethren

Rev. Elenora Giddings Ivory, Director
Presbyterian Church (USA) Washington Office

Naomi Fuentes, Director
Special Program on Substance Abuse and Related Violence
United Methodist Church

Rev. Ruben Cruz, Chairman
Church Finance Council,
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Michael H. Crosby, OFM Cap., Coordinator
Tobacco Program
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

Roy Branson, Co-Chair
Inter-Religious Coalition on Smoking or Health

Barbara Baylor, M.P.H.
Minister for Health and Wellness
United Church of Christ

Sharon Adkins, President
Health Ministries Association