



**Western States Affiliate**

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Sara Robertson

August 12, 2011

The Honorable Felipe Fuentes  
State Capitol, Room 2114  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Fuentes,

As a constituent of the 39th District, Heart Disease Survivor, and Chair of the American Heart Association's 2020 Impact Goal Steering Committee, I appreciate your willingness to meet with us when we were in Sacramento, and the subsequent discussions that we have had with your staff.

While we appreciate the ongoing discussion, we are discouraged that you have yet to make a decision on our request to amend Assembly Bill 1069 so that California's film incentive program reflects the public health priorities of our state and the nation. To align public film subsidies with public health evidence and goals, we urge you to amend the California Film and Television Tax Credit Program so that future films with tobacco imagery or reference are ineligible for public subsidies.

Research shows that youth who are exposed to smoking in movies are more likely to start smoking. The impact that the use of tobacco in movies has on enticing new young smokers has been documented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Their recent report on this issue was released on July 15, 2011. While the number of on-screen tobacco incidents in youth-rated movies has declined significantly since 2005, 45 percent of the top grossing movies in 2010 still showed tobacco imagery, including 31 percent of youth rated movies. The report demonstrated that the danger posed to adolescents by watching movies with tobacco imagery continues, and recommended that state subsidies for movies should be limited to tobacco-free movies. AB 1069 provides California with the opportunity to implement the CDC's recommendation of limiting subsidies for movies to only those that do not have tobacco-related imagery.

Tobacco companies routinely target youth because studies have shown that those who start smoking before the age of 18 are more likely to pick up this deadly habit and become lifelong smokers. The AHA has advocated for numerous public policies aimed at curbing youth smoking. We have also



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engaged in advocating for the removal of the incidence of the use of tobacco in youth-rated movies. This has resulted in the Motion Picture Association of America committing to reducing the number of tobacco incidents in youth-rated movies. However, the other major studios have not done the same.

There are many organizations interested in this issue and the opportunity AB 1069 provides to reduce the smoking prevalence among our youth. We are aware of the recent correspondence from the Tobacco Education and Research Oversight Committee (TEROC) about the bill to you. Comprised of experts in tobacco control and prevention, TEROC is the legislatively mandated advisory committee that provides advice to the Department of Public Health, the University of California, and the State Department of Education. They also publish the state master plan for tobacco control and tobacco-related research and are charged with overseeing the use of Proposition 99 tobacco tax revenues for tobacco control and prevention education.

California has been a leader in the tobacco control movement. The State's Tobacco Control and Prevention program is excellent and is a model program recognized both nationally and internationally. It is incongruent to have such a strong state program while at the same time providing subsidies for movie productions that depict the use of tobacco which we know will increase the use of tobacco among our youth.

AB 1069 provides California with the opportunity to change this and implement the CDC's recommendation by limiting subsidies for movies to only those that do not have tobacco-related imagery. We urge you to include this amendment while the bill is on suspense in the Senate Appropriations committee.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Jacqueline Alikhaani  
Chair, AHA 2020 Impact Goals Steering Committee