

**Tobacco and Health Trust Fund (THTF) Board of Trustees**

**October 22, 2025**

**Via Microsoft Teams**

**The meeting was recorded and can be viewed in its entirety at this link**

<https://youtu.be/LkKdtbgB21U>

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members in Attendance: Claudio Gualtieri (Chair), Robert Boris, Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Ayesha Clarke, Anne Foley, Samuel Hahn, Cindy Harrison, Steven Hernandez, Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin, Mathew Jasinski, John McArdle, Christopher Moran, Michael Rell.

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board of Trustees - Members Excused: Toni Harp, Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Tricia Orozco, and Andrew Salner.

Board of Trustees Staff: Melissa Morton, Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and Sharica Rose (OPM).

Others Present: Deputy Commissioner Lisa Morrissey, Department of Public Health (DPH) for Commissioner Manisha Juthani, Sarju Shah, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS); Victoria Adams, Southern CT State University (SCSU); Stephanie Johnson, Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD).

Meeting called to order by Chair Gualtieri at 10:31 A.M.

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	Chair Gualtieri, (OPM) called the meeting to order and introduced new Board Trustee Dr. John McArdle, appointed by Senate President Pro Tempore Martin Looney. Dr. McArdle is Board Certified in Internal Medicine, Pulmonary Disease and Critical Care Medicine. He is employed in the full-time clinical practice of pulmonary and critical care medicine for Starling Physicians. He also serves as a pulmonary/critical care attending physician at Saint Francis Hospital. This appointment completes the Board, there are zero vacancies. Dr. McArdle shared that he is honored and happy to join the THTF Board and looks forward to assisting with the important work of the team.  Melissa Morton, (OPM) called the roll.
<b>Adopt Minutes from July 23, 2025 Meeting</b>	Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adopt the minutes from the July 23, 2025, meeting. Robert Boris made a motion to adopt. Chair Gualtieri seconded. No discussion. Thirteen in favor, zero opposed, and one abstention. Motion approved. Minutes adopted.
<b>Adopt Meeting Schedule for 2026</b>	Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adopt <a href="#">meeting schedule for 2026</a> , retaining the same meeting cadence. Cindy Harrison made a motion to adopt. John McArdle seconded. No discussion. All in favor, zero opposed, and zero abstentions. Motion approved. Meeting schedule adopted.
<b>Stated Goal of Today's Meeting</b>	Chair Gualtieri reviewed the agenda and goals for the meeting. He noted that members will have the opportunity to hear directly from two THTF grantees, receive an overview of the JUUL Annual Report and conclude with public comment and discussion of next steps.
<b>Trust Fund Account Update</b>	Sharica Rose, Fiscal Administrative Officer, OPM, shared an account balance update and detailed interest earned as of September 30, 2025.

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Trust Fund Account Update	<p>The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights from the Presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The total approved allocation for FY23 and FY24 is \$26,394,776. Of the approved allocation, \$23,914,285 has been awarded, leaving a balance of \$2,480,491 FY24 funds.</li> <li>• To date, \$5,512,459 has been drawn down by DPH leaving an account balance of \$21,708,422.10, that includes \$826,105.10 of interest earned since 10/1/24.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Discussion</u></b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cindy Harrison requested clarification on the \$2,480,491 that was not awarded for FY24, and confirmation of how the funds will be allotted. Melissa Morton responded that due to the number of proposals received and at the discretion of the evaluation team, \$2.4 million was not awarded from the cessation category following more evidence-based outcomes of the existing cessation projects. Chair Gualtieri further advised that any unallocated funds can be included in the next allocation plan developed after the expected April 2026 THTF allotment is received.</li> <li>• Steven Hernandez asked for further insight into the policy on accruing interest. Chair Gualtieri explained that the state has a general policy regarding interest bearing accounts and manages risk and ensures interest accrual.</li> <li>• Anne Foley asked for a reminder on the gap of funding appropriation for FY25. Chair Gualtieri shared that there due to the amount of time it took to reestablish the Board, members allocated two fiscal years of funding in a condensed amount of time. The THTF did not receive an allocation in FY25 to allow the Board time to catch up on allocations and contracting. The current biennium budget includes \$12 million in FY26 and FY27. The next deposit into the account is anticipated April 2026 and will have the Board back on cycle.</li> </ul>
JUUL Annual Report to the Board	<p>Chair Gualtieri shared that pursuant to Public Act 23-92, DMHAS is required each September, to submit to the THTF Board a report on the disbursement of JUUL funding to the Regional Behavioral Health Action Organizations (RBHAOs) and how it was expended, including the progress of the disbursement and where the RBHAOs implementation.</p> <p>Sarju Shah, Division Director of Prevention and Health Promotion at DMHAS provided a review of the 2025 JUUL Annual Report.</p> <p>The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the presentation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Background and disbursement:</b> JUUL settlement funds are disbursed from DMHAS to the RBHAOs for youth prevention work relating to nicotine or nicotine-synthetic products. In May 2024, sixteen-month contracts were executed with the five (5) RBHAOs in</li> </ul>

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<b>JUUL Annual Report to the Board</b>	<p>the amounts of \$300,000 each for a total of \$1.5 million disbursed by September 30, 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Statewide Strategic Overview:</b> Statewide strategies include but are not limited to, (1) information dissemination, (2) comprehensive school vaping policy review, (3) Tobacco Treatment Specialist certification, (4) dissemination of nicotine “Quit Kits,” (5) nicotine retailer outreach &amp; education, (6) community outreach and identification of relevant cross-sector partnerships.</li> <li>• <b>Priority Needs and Prevention Activities:</b> (1) retailer education, (2) school-based prevention, education and outreach, (3) cessation activities, (4) community-based prevention, education and outreach, and (5) policy advocacy.</li> <li>• <b>Next Steps:</b> Contract amendments are being executed for the RBHAOs next phase of work 10/1/25-6/30/27.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion</b></p> <p>A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair Gualtieri asked if there would be opportunities in the future where Tobacco and Health Trust funds can be used to support some of the promising initiatives through the work of the RBHAOs. Sarju Shah shared that DMHAS is working with DPH to coordinate efforts and enhance what is currently in place to ensure that funding is being utilized effectively.</li> <li>• Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin asked how DMHAS assesses the effectiveness of all reported efforts. Sarju Shah shared that the RBHAO contracts include use of an outside evaluator to review and measure effectiveness of the work being completed. Additionally, as part of the RBHAOs direct community work, focus group surveys are also conducted to assess effectiveness.</li> <li>• Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin asked how new e-cigarette products will be captured, following the approval for marketing. Sarju Shah advised that for the youth, efforts are captured through retailer education, training for ENDS-vape licensed dealers as part of the mission to ensure they are not selling the products to youth. RBHAOs also use resources to educate adults on the harm of these products.</li> <li>• Ayesha Clark asked in the chat about the rate of response for the surveys conducted and the attendance at the focus groups. In response, Sarju Shah shared a link in the chat to provide a high-level overview of <a href="#">DMHAS 2024-25 Regional Priority Reports: Process and Selected Results</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Southern CT State University</b>	<p>Chair Gualtieri welcomed DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to introduce the State and Community Intervention vendor, Southern CT State University (SCSU), to provide a project overview. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey shared her excitement to have the grantees showcase their work and introduced SCSU to provide their presentation.</p>

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<b>Southern CT State University</b>	<p>Victoria Adams, CPAHA Tobacco Treatment, NCTTP Tobacco Program Coordinator of SCSU presented an overview of services and contract highlights in support of State and Community Intervention. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the project presentation:</p> <p>SCSU will use THTF grant funding to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide tobacco prevention and community trainings to municipalities in southern and central parts of the state.</li> <li>• Provide tobacco prevention peer education sessions in middle and high schools.</li> <li>• Train school staff on best practices in tobacco control and support implementation of alternative to suspension curriculum.</li> <li>• Increase state tobacco cessation capacity through Tobacco Treatment Specialist Trainings.</li> <li>• Conduct needs assessment for Youth MATCH Coalition Workgroup.</li> <li>• Provide mini-grants to colleges/universities for adopting/strengthening tobacco-free campus policy.</li> </ul>
<b>Farmington Valley Health District</b>	<p>Chair Gualtieri invited DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to introduce the State and Community Intervention and Cessation vendor, Farmington Valley Health District (FVHD), to provide a project overview. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey expressed her enthusiasm for and existing partnership with the local health department and introduced FVHD to provide their presentation.</p> <p>Stephanie Johnson, Acting Director of FVHD presented an overview of services and contract highlights in support of State and Community Intervention and Cessation. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the presentation:</p> <p>FVHD will use THTF grant funding as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a community coalition to include representatives from youth, school administrators, healthcare providers, parents, school nurses, resource officers; FVHD's mental health programming (RGH and tMHFA) to address underlying mental health challenges in students.</li> <li>• Engage in strategic planning and develop a compendium of sustainable EBP for reducing youth and young adult tobacco use and initiation; guide schools, healthcare providers and other community organizations to strengthen existing policies.</li> <li>• Implement a communication campaign to review evidence-based messaging for population of focus; obtain information from schools, healthcare providers and community organizations on current</li> </ul>

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<b>Farmington Valley Health District</b>	<p>communications and gaps; partner with a media vendor to plan and design communication campaign tailored to youth and young adults.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilize a school policy assessment tool in connection with the American Lung Association school policy assessment; collaborate with each school to identify the need for an updated Tobacco-Free School Policy.</li> <li>• Offer prevention education &amp; youth cessation programs by providing technical assistance to schools implementing Stanford REACH Lab's Tobacco Prevention Toolkit; provide monthly INDEPTH online programs to students referred from schools, JRBs and parents.</li> <li>• Develop a peer-led tobacco prevention &amp; cessation group to conduct literature review of peer support models; recruit and train high school peer support mentors; create a student voice for prevention and cessation messaging, activities and interventions.</li> <li>• Utilize partnership with existing healthcare providers to improve provider capacity and use of tobacco screening tools; provide promotional materials; promote referrals into cessation programs including NOT and My Life My Quit.</li> <li>• Provide access to the CredibleMind Integration platform, which is a one-stop shop for mental wellbeing resources; free, online application that brings together expert-rated and vetted videos, podcasts, apps, online programs, books and articles all in one easy-to-use place; can learn new skills, understand your own mental health, take a mental health assessment and browse library of thousands of mental wellbeing resources.</li> </ul>
<b>Update on FY 2023 and FY 2024 Contracts</b>	<p>Chair Gualtieri introduced DPH Deputy Commissioner Morrissey to provide an update on contract development for projects funded with FY 2023 THTF dollars and the Request for Proposal (RFP) implementation process for the FY 2024 THTF allocation. Deputy Commissioner Morrissey presented an overview and recap of the two allocations plans. The full presentation can be found on the <a href="#">Tobacco and Health Trust Fund website</a>. The following are highlights of the presentation:</p> <p><b><u>FY 2023 RFP Recap and Contract Status</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The full \$12 million allocated in FY23 was awarded.</li> <li>• Of the seven (7) grants that were awarded as part of the FY24 RFP process, two (2) contracts have been fully executed, SCSU and FVHD, who have provided presentations at this meeting. One (1) contract, Wheeler Health, is pending execution, while the remaining (4) four contracts are in various stages of the contract process.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>FY 2024 RFP Update</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the \$14,394,776 allocated for FY24 (includes \$12 million from the FY24 THTF deposit, balance of unallocated funds from prior years and interest earned through 9/30/25) \$11,914,285 was awarded.</li> </ul>

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<b>Update on FY 2023 and FY 2024 Contracts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eight (8) grants were awarded. Five (5) for Component 1, State and Community Intervention, and three (3) for Component 3, Cessation Intervention, to include FY 2023 QuitLine vendor National Jewish Health (NJH). No FY24 contract has been fully executed but all Contracts are in various stages of development.</li> <li>• As of October 14, 2025, \$2,013 has been spent for Component 5, Infrastructure, Administration and Management, leaving an unallocated balance of \$493,778.</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Discussion</u></b> A question-and-answer period followed the presentation. Below are the highlights:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A member asked for a reminder regarding the unallocated balance of \$2.4 million for Cessation Intervention. Julie Vigil, Branch Chief of DPH, advised that \$2 million has been set aside for the QuitLine vendor and the anticipated number of proposals were not received for Component 3. Chair Gualtieri further shared that due to statutory authority and the limited ability to transfer funds between categories, it may be a good opportunity to put this forward as a legislative item and discussion to request additional flexibility to adjust future allocation plans.</li> </ul>
<b>Discussion of Next Steps</b> a) <b>Standing Agenda Items &amp; Program Updates</b> b) <b>Presentation from Grantees</b> c) <b>Other Topics of Interest to Board</b>	Chair Gualtieri previewed future agenda items for the next meeting: a) DPH to provide updates on budget, projects and contract status along with and a full THTF account balance update from OPM. b) Presentations from selected vendors as contracts are executed. c) Board members may reach out to Chair Gualtieri and Melissa Morton if they have other items that they would like addressed at a future meeting.
<b>Public Comment</b>	Suchithra Krishnan-Sarin addressed the Board as a member of the public to share her recent experience in Washington, DC, where she organized and participated on a panel to present various rising concerns to U.S. Senators following the impacts and changes that have been implemented at a federal level, effecting the CDC and tobacco control program and funding cuts. Senators in attendance were largely engaged. She shared her passion on this matter and hopes that the collaborative efforts of those on the panel and in the audience will have a positive impact at the federal and state levels.
<b>Adjourn</b>	<b><u>VOTE:</u></b> Chair Gualtieri called for a motion to adjourn. Cindy Harrison made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Chair Gualtieri. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:55 A.M.