

## House Republican Press Release

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### Representative Scribner Legislation Would Use Settlement Funds For Tobacco Education Programs



**HARTFORD-** State Representative David A. Scribner (R-Brookfield, Bethel) has introduced legislation approved by the Legislature's Public Health Committee that would designate \$3 million dollars from the Tobacco Settlement Fund to the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) for tobacco education programs designed to discourage smoking among

students in grades one through eight. Rep. Scribner's legislation was an amendment to House Bill 5078, which was unanimously approved by the committee on March 26 and now moves to the full House of Representatives for consideration.

HB 5078 would also make possession of tobacco by a minor an infraction that would result in a fine. The legal age to purchase tobacco products in Connecticut is 18. However, possession of tobacco by a minor is not currently illegal.

Rep. Scribner's amendment would require DMHAS to administer a grant program to provide funds for tobacco education programs in various regions of the state and establish reporting requirements for grant recipients. DMHAS Deputy Commissioner Peter Rockholz worked with Rep. Scribner in crafting the legislation.

"This is a smart way to use Tobacco Settlement Funds," said Rockholz. "It will prevent future use of tobacco by kids. The right age to reach them is before they start smoking and they are starting earlier than people think. This would also help reduce the number of children who later go on to use illegal drugs. Kids who smoke cigarettes are 12 times more likely to use marijuana and 19 times more likely to use cocaine than those who do not smoke."

"This bill would finally devote a considerable amount of state funds toward one of the major goals the tobacco settlement was designed to meet," said Rep. Scribner. "This is a very positive initiative for the health of Connecticut's children and I am pleased my colleagues on the Public Health Committee overwhelmingly supported it."