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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**MAY 21, 2004**

**ATTENTION: NEWS DIRECTORS/ASSIGNMENT EDITORS/Writers/REPORTERS**

## **LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR UNVEILS NEW STATISTICS ON AFRICAN-AMERICAN SMOKING TRENDS AND NEW CESSATION HOTLINE**

### **OLD NORTH STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY CONVENES EXPERTS TO FOCUS ON TOUGH HEALTH ISSUES**

**(Raleigh, N.C.)** – Today, Lt. Gov. Beverly Perdue, Chair of the NC Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission (HWTFC), announced new statistics about tobacco-use and its impact on African-American teens. She also unveiled a smoking prevention hotline targeted towards African American teen in Northeastern North Carolina at a news conference at the North Raleigh Hilton.

Members of the NC Legislative Black Caucus and members of the Old North State Medical Society, one of the nation's oldest African-American medical societies, joined the Lieutenant Governor for this announcement which coincided with the Old North State Medical Society's 117th Scientific Convention and Annual Meeting taking place today through Sunday. This year's convention, "Insights to the Future: A New Generation of Health, Harvest and Hope," is a vehicle for discussing and reviewing critical healthcare policy issues and healthcare disparities that impact the African-American community.

"I wanted to give everyone a preview of the state's latest findings as it relates to our fight to curb tobacco use among African-American teens," said Lt. Gov. Perdue. "There is reason for hope and cause for concern, and the NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund Commission is ready to step up to these challenges."

According to the 2003 Youth Tobacco Survey's Preliminary Report, African-American teens in North Carolina are, in certain key respects, not keeping pace with their white counterparts when it comes to saying "no" to tobacco.

#### **Some important tobacco facts:**

- African-American high school students who report ever using tobacco dropped from 66.9 percent in 1999 to 62.1 percent in 2003.
- White high school students who report ever using tobacco declined significantly from 68.9 percent in 1999 to 57.8 percent in 2003.
- African-American high school smokers reported a much higher desire to quit smoking than white students. 66.5 percent of African-American high school students said they wanted to quit compared to 47.3 percent of white high school smokers.

**-More-**

Quitline, a pilot project with the American Cancer Society, is a special call-in line that provides life-saving information about quitting the smoking habit. The promotional campaign targets minority young people in six key Northeastern counties—Edgecombe, Halifax, Warren, Hertford, Northampton and Bertie.

Public relations professional Henry Lancaster of Lancaster, Craig & Associates will work with the NC Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission to spread the word about what Quitline can do for them. Lancaster will work with community leaders, media in eastern North Carolina, church groups and others to spread the word to African-American teens.

The two new initiatives are additions to other HWTFC programs currently being implemented to curb tobacco use among African-American teens.

Old North State Medical Society, along with the General Baptist State Convention, have received HWTFC grants to help target intervention among African-Americans. These grants are among the \$2.5 million invested directly in minority organizations.

Of the remaining Health & Wellness funds, 56 percent are invested in counties that have a disproportionately high number of minorities compared to the overall minority population in the state.

On the teen tobacco prevention front, the *TRU* movement, short for *Tobacco.Reality.Unfiltered*, recently launched the state's first ever NC-based television campaign to prevent teen smoking.

To fully round out the state's awareness efforts in reaching minority kids, HWTFC will partner with a communications firm that has specific expertise in reaching minority youth.

"With the new Quitline project, our focused communications efforts, along with many other projects across the state, we will use community resources and local wisdom about what works best in each community," said Lt. Gov. Perdue. "I'm excited that the Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission is funding this important effort."

**ABOUT THE NC HEALTH & WELLNESS TRUST FUND COMMISSION:**

The NC Health & Wellness Trust Fund Commission (HWTFC) makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTFC has invested \$55 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$78 million to fund a prescription drug assistance program. For more information on how preventive health is good for our lives and good for our wallets, please visit [www.hwtfc.org](http://www.hwtfc.org).

**ABOUT OLD NORTH STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY:**

Old North State Medical Society, founded in 1886, is one of the nation's oldest associations of black physicians. Old North State Medical Society's objectives are equity in health care, equal opportunity for black health care professionals and equal care for black, other ethnic minorities, and for patients, who cannot afford medical assistance.

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