

Oklahoma Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) Board of Directors: Resolution on The Importance of Cancer Screenings

August 2023

WHEREAS, the Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET) was created by voters in 2000 from a portion of the state's share of funds from the Master Settlement Agreement with Big Tobacco. The earnings from the endowment are used by the Board of Directors to support efforts to improve the health of Oklahomans; and

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma Constitution, directs endowment earnings to reduce Oklahoma's leading causes of preventable death – tobacco use and obesity – to reduce cancer and cardiovascular disease. TSET funds prevention programs and research to improve the health of every Oklahoman; and

WHEREAS, cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S.¹ Oklahoma has the 7th highest cancer mortality rate, it is 14% higher than the national average;² and

WHEREAS, smoking remains the leading cause of preventable death in the U.S. and in Oklahoma despite progress in reducing the smoking rate to below 17%. Every year, 7,500 Oklahomans die from smoking-related illnesses, and tobacco costs the state over \$1.8 billion in healthcare costs annually;³ and

WHEREAS, smoking causes around 20% of cancers and 30% of cancer deaths in the U.S. Around 80% of lung cancers are caused by smoking and it is the leading cause of cancer death;⁴ and

WHEREAS, the average rate of lung cancer mortality (per 100,000) is 45.5 in Oklahoma and is 33.4 nationally.⁵ Oklahoma is last in the nation for lung cancer survival and its rate for lung cancer screening is 5th worst in the U.S.;⁶ and

WHEREAS, early detection is vital for lung cancer survival. It is often diagnosed after it has already spread. In 2022, only 2% of high-risk adults were screened for lung cancer;⁷ and

WHEREAS, in February 2023, this Board awarded \$1.56 million to OU Health's Stephenson Cancer Center (SCC) for a lung cancer screening bus known as Oklahoma LUNG SCAN, to bring screening access to rural communities via medically equipped buses; and

WHEREAS, TSET has invested in cancer research at the SCC, the TSET Health Promotion Research Center and Oklahoma Center for Adult Stem Cell Research, which has helped bring millions of dollars in additional research funds and assisted researchers in understanding diseases and new treatment options; and

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/leading-causes-of-death.htm>

² <https://www.ouhealth.com/stephenson-cancer-center/community-outreach-and-engagement/cancer-issues-in-oklahoma/>

³ <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/oklahoma>

⁴ <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/health-risks-of-tobacco/health-risks-of-smoking-tobacco.html>

⁵ <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/aem-documents/health-promotion/center-for-chronic-disease-prevention---health-promotion/tobacco-use-reduction-state-plan-2022.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.lung.org/media/press-releases/solc-ok-2022>

⁷ <https://www.lung.org/research/state-of-lung-cancer/states/oklahoma>

WHEREAS, the Oklahoma TSET Phase 1 Program at SCC provides access to the newest investigational drugs to patients. Over 2,000 patients have participated in early-phase 1 clinical trials since 2017 and the SCC has had a National Cancer Institute designation since 2018;⁸ and

WHEREAS, cancer research and care has greatly expanded in our state in recent years -- more work is needed to promote cancer screenings. It is important to detect cancer early to ensure patients have the greatest chance for successful treatment and survival.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the TSET Board of Directors supports local, community and statewide efforts to:

- Reduce cancer screening stigma and encourage patients to screen by promoting the importance of regular checkups and cancer screenings.
- Expand cancer screening programs by assisting with cost, availability, and promotion.
- Advocate for health systems interventions to require tobacco use screening and treatment as a core component of care.⁹
- Improve cancer screening access for high-risk populations.¹⁰
- Reduce structural barriers to increase cancer screenings. These barriers can include childcare, transportation, translation services and clinic hours and locations.¹¹
- Leverage technology to assist with personal reminders for screenings and increase healthcare access through telemedicine services.
- Prevent cancer risks by reducing air pollution¹² and adopting healthy behaviors, including being tobacco-free, limiting alcohol use, sustaining healthy nutrition, being safe in the sun and maintaining an active lifestyle.¹³

FURTHERMORE, BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the TSET Board of Directors respectively recommends the adoption of the aforementioned policies and strategies to improve the cancer screening rate in Oklahoma.

THE TSET BOARD OF DIRECTORS hereby calls upon other interested groups and governing bodies to adopt similar resolutions.

⁸ <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/tset/documents/public-info/reports-data/TSET%20FY22AR-FINAL.pdf>

⁹ <https://oklahoma.gov/content/dam/ok/en/health/health2/aem-documents/health-promotion/center-for-chronic-disease-prevention---health-promotion/tobacco-use-reduction-state-plan-2022.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.lung.org/research/state-of-lung-cancer/states/oklahoma>

¹¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/community-resources/interventions/index.htm>

¹² <https://www.lung.org/research/state-of-lung-cancer/key-findings>

¹³ <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/resources/publications/factsheets/cancer.htm>