

# **TOBACCO SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT FUND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE**

## **Minutes of the 10th Meeting of the 2021 Interim**

**December 9, 2021**

### **Call to Order and Roll Call**

The 10th meeting of the Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee was held on Thursday, December 9, 2021, at 10:30 AM, in Room 131 of the Capitol Annex. Senator C.B. Embry Jr., Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator C.B. Embry Jr., Co-Chair; Representative Myron Dossett, Co-Chair; Senators Dennis Parrett, Robin L. Webb, and Whitney Westerfield; Representatives Kim King, Phillip Pratt, Brandon Reed, and Rachel Roberts.

Guests: Brian Lacefield, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy (KOAP); Bill McCloskey, Deputy Executive Director, KOAP; Jason Chesney, M.D., Ph.D., Director, University of Louisville James Graham Brown Cancer Center (BCC); B. Mark Evers, M.D., Director, University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center (MCC); Joe E. Springer, Ph.D., Interim Director, University of Kentucky Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center; and Scott R. Whittemore, Ph.D., Director, University of Louisville Spinal Cord Injury Research Center.

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Nathan Smith, Kelly Ludwig, and Rachel Hartley.

The minutes from the meeting of November 10, 2021, were approved by voice vote.

### **Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy Report**

Brian Lacefield stated the Agricultural Development Board approved guidelines for programs and projects for 2022 at its November meeting.

Bill McCloskey described the Agricultural Development Board's projects for November under the program. Mr. McCloskey highlighted programs including the County Agricultural Investment Program (CAIP), Next Generation Farmer, Shared-Use Equipment Program, and Youth Agriculture Incentives Program.

The following were approved for state funds through the On-Farm Water Management Program:

- Sustainable Harvest Farm LLC in Laurel County was approved for \$10,000.

- Jillian Nash (Nash Farms) in Washington County was approved for \$5,029.50.

The following project was discussed:

- Kentucky State Beekeepers Association was approved for \$57,550 in state funds to help with the logistics of the Certified Kentucky Honey Program.

In response to Representative Pratt, Mr. Lacefield stated decreased availability of inputs and increased pricing are affecting farmers in Kentucky.

In response to Representative Dossett, Mr. Lacefield stated there has been a significant increase in the price of fertilizer.

### **Utilization of Tobacco Settlement Funds for Cancer Research**

Jason Chesney, M.D., Ph.D., stated Kentucky is ground zero for cancer in the United States with 20,090 cancer deaths in 2020 and 2021.

The University of Louisville James Graham Brown Cancer Center (BCC) receives \$3.4 million annually from the Master Settlement. The funding supports clinical trialists, research staff, drug development programs, and innovative cancer screening programs.

The national cancer death rate dropped by 30 percent in the last 30 years. The goal of BCC is to decrease cancer deaths by another 30 percent in the next five years by increasing and improving cancer screenings, developing novel targeted therapies, and conducting trials of immunotherapies.

Many common cancers can be detected with proven screening technologies, but there is low participation. BCC is working to increase cancer screening rates and to develop less invasive approaches to detect cancer.

B. Mark Evers, M.D., stated the mission of the University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center (MCC) is to reduce cancer mortality through cancer research, treatment, education, and community engagement with a particular focus on the underserved population of Appalachian Kentucky.

Kentucky ranks first in cancer mortality, cancer incidence, and lung cancer mortality in the United States. Six of the ten counties in the United States with the highest cancer death rates are in Kentucky. Kentucky has a very high mortality rate of colorectal and lung cancer.

MCC was awarded an initial designation by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in 2013, and the designation was renewed in 2018. In 2022, MCC plans to apply for comprehensive status.

The Master Settlement has provided critical funding for cancer screenings, new recruitment and retention of cancer investigators, pilot funding for new cancer research projects, and funding for new clinical trials.

In response to Senator Embry, Dr. Evers stated there are currently 180 to 200 clinical cancer trials at MCC.

### **Utilization of Tobacco Settlement Funds for Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research**

Scott R. Whittemore, Ph.D., stated the University of Louisville Kentucky Spinal Cord Injury Research Center and the University of Kentucky Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center receive funding through the Kentucky Spinal Cord and Head Injury Research Trust (KSCHIRT). KSCHIRT funds are utilized to support trainees, visiting lecturers, the international symposium, and faculty development. The remainder of the funds support three year grant proposals. The KSCHIRT study section evaluates all grants and awards them solely on scientific merit.

The KSCHIRT revenues have decreased over the last decade due to a change in the distribution formula in 2010. Many of the outstanding grants are unfunded.

Joe E. Springer, Ph.D., discussed several clinical trials resulting from KSCHIRT funding and provided a brief overview of the African American Research Training Scholars Program.

KSCHIRT will require a sustainable level of funding similar to that received prior to 2010 to facilitate future discoveries and treatments, and to train the next generation of researchers.

Representative King expressed gratitude to Dr. Whittemore and Dr. Springer for their work.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.