

TOBACCO SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT FUND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

Minutes

December 22, 2025

Call to Order and Roll Call

The sixth meeting of the Tobacco Settlement Agreement Fund Oversight Committee was held on December 22, 2025, at 10:30 AM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Michael Sarge Pollock, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Michael Sarge Pollock, Co-Chair; Senators Aaron Reed, Craig Richardson, and Robin L. Webb; and Representatives Myron Dossett, Daniel Fister, Kim King, Shawn McPherson, and Rachel Roarx.

Guests: Brandon Reed, Executive Director, Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy (KOAP); Bill McCloskey, Deputy Executive Director, KOAP; Jason Chesney, M.D., Ph.D., Director, University of Louisville Brown Cancer Center (BCC); and B. Mark Evers, M.D., Director, University of Kentucky Markey Cancer Center (MCC).

LRC Staff: Stefan Kasacavage, Hillary Abbott, Kelly Ludwig, and Rachel Hartley.

Approval of minutes for the meeting of October 9, 2025

A motion to approve the October 9, 2025, meeting minutes was made by Representative Fister and seconded by Senator Reed. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

Report on the projects considered for funding by the Agricultural Development Board

Brandon Reed, Executive Director, KOAP, stated the KOAP annual report will be delivered to all members. The report contains updates on activities and achievements in agriculture and related sectors. Mr. Reed also shared updates on various events and initiatives.

In October 2025, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board (KADB) approved \$1.2 million in funds, and the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation (KAFC) approved

\$4.5 million in funds. In November 2025, the KADB approved \$2.3 million in funds, and the KAFC approved \$4.1 million in funds.

Bill McCloskey, Deputy Executive Director, KOAP, highlighted the following projects:

- The University of Kentucky was approved for \$147,000 in state funds to support the educational outreach and continued research of Kentucky hay production used in the equine industry.
- Kentucky Highlands Investment Corporation was approved for \$250,000 in state funds to further capitalize the Kentucky Highlands Shaping our Appalachian Region (SOAR) small farm loan fund.
- Owen County Animal Clinic was approved for \$83,333 in state funds and \$16,667 in Owen County funds as part of the Large and Food Animal Incentives Program to build a veterinary clinic and haul-in facility for small and large animals.
- Kentucky State University was approved for \$1.4 million in state funds to aid in continuing its mini-grant program to help producers across the state.
- Kentucky Community and Technical College System Foundation, Inc. was approved for \$63,200 in state funds to develop and implement a comprehensive certification program for meat processing.
- The University of Kentucky Research Foundation was approved for \$181,952 in state funds to support its Viticulture and Enology Extension Program.

Senator Webb highlighted the need for effective resource allocation and the importance of understanding the impact of funded projects on local communities. Senator Webb questioned the effectiveness of long-term funding for certain initiatives and requested data from KOAP to assess the success of investments over the years.

In response to Representative Roarx, Mr. McCloskey stated Santerre, LLC was denied funding by the KADB due to limited producer impact and the project had already secured funding from the Bluegrass AgTech Development Corporation, which itself is funded by the KADB.

Utilization of Tobacco Settlement Funds for Cancer Research

Jason Chesney, M.D., Ph.D., Director, BCC, presented statistics regarding cancer death rates in Kentucky, which remain significantly higher than the national average. Kentucky has not made substantial progress in reducing these rates over the past two decades, highlighting a healthcare crisis that impacts both health outcomes and the economy. Dr. Chesney emphasized the need for improved access to quality healthcare, particularly in underserved regions of the state, and discussed the importance of specialized cancer care and outreach programs.

Dr. Chesney shared insights in the rising incidence of cancer among younger populations and the increasing demand for treatments. Screening programs such as the mobile mammography unit and low-dose CT scans for lung cancer were highlighted as key initiatives aimed at improving early detection rates.

Dr. Chesney also discussed education and training for healthcare professionals, with a focus on retaining newly trained doctors within the state.

Dr. Chesney addressed the funding challenges faced by cancer research and treatment in Kentucky, pointing out the disparity in cancer funding per capita between Kentucky and states like North Carolina, where more substantial financial support has led to better health outcomes. Dr. Chesney advocated for increased funding from tobacco settlement resources to enhance cancer care and research.

B. Mark Evers, M.D., Director, MCC, emphasized the importance of state funding in achieving National Cancer Institute (NCI) designation, which allows for increased funding, enabling more extensive research, clinical trials, and community outreach programs. This designation also attracts top-tier researchers and oncologists, which enhances MCC's ability to offer cutting-edge treatments and trials. MCC has expanded its network across Kentucky, establishing 19 affiliate hospitals to improve patient access to care, particularly in rural areas.

MCC is constructing a new ambulatory care building to accommodate the increased patient volume, which has more than doubled since the NCI designation. This facility will centralize various cancer services, allowing patients to receive comprehensive care in one location.

MCC's outreach efforts include mentoring students from the Appalachian region, and aiming to increase the local healthcare workforce. This initiative has successfully guided numerous students into medical and research careers, with many now pursuing advanced degrees and planning to practice in Kentucky.

In response to Representative McPherson, Dr. Chesney expressed skepticism regarding alternative treatments like ivermectin, highlighting the need for rigorous clinical trials to validate any claims of efficacy. Dr. Chesney emphasized the importance of established treatments and the ongoing development of new therapies, underscoring the center's commitment to evidence-based medicine and patient safety. Dr. Evers highlighted the importance of rigorous testing for new and repurposed drugs in cancer treatment,

emphasizing that while some older medications may show promise, they require thorough clinical trials to validate their effectiveness.

In response to Senator Webb, Dr. Evers stated federal budget cuts could jeopardize prevention and clinical trial initiatives. There is bipartisan support at the federal level, which could help mitigate potential funding losses. Dr. Chesney stated a tax structure that includes vaping products could generate substantial revenue for cancer centers.

Representative Dossett raised concerns about accessibility of vaping products and the need for protective measures for children, highlighting the need for legislative actions that could address these issues.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.