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**Statement of Matthew L. Myers
President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
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Welcome. My name is Matthew Myers, President of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

We are here both to recognize one of the great public health achievements of the 20th century and to acknowledge just how much remains to be done. As much progress has been made, tobacco remains this nation's number one cause of preventable, premature death and disease.

Today the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, American Heart Association, American Lung Association, Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights, and Legacy have come together to announce our commitment to the following three bold goals:

- Reduce smoking rates, currently at about 18 percent, to less than 10 percent within 10 years
- Protect all Americans from secondhand smoke within five years, and
- Ultimately eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco use.

50 years ago this week then United States Surgeon General Luther Terry issued the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health, which concluded that smoking is causally related to lung cancer. We now know that, if anything, the first Report of the Surgeon General dramatically understated the actual health risks of smoking.

To quote Dr. Thomas Frieden, the Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Tobacco is, quite simply, in a league of its own in terms of the sheer numbers and varieties of ways it kills and maims people."

What has been accomplished in the last 50 years is nothing short of astounding. Since 1964 the adult smoking rate has been cut by 55%, from 42.4% in 1965 to about 18% in 2012. Per capita consumption of cigarettes has fallen 72%. The smoking rate among high school seniors has fallen from over 36% in 1997 to 16.3% last year.

In 1964 smoking was permitted virtually everywhere. Today, about half the U.S. population is protected by laws requiring smoke-free restaurants, bars and other workplaces.

This fundamental change has had a profound impact on the health of Americans. Lung cancer rates are falling after climbing for decades. The decline in smoking has also contributed to the dramatic drop in heart disease and respiratory disease and, as you will hear from Professor Ken Warner shortly, the reduction in tobacco use has been a major factor, if not the most significant factor, in the overall improvement in life expectancy of all Americans.

And yet, today tobacco still kills over 400,000 Americans every year. 44 million adults and 3.6 million children still smoke in our country. Make no mistake; tobacco use is a pediatric disease. Every day more than 3000 kids light up for the first time and 90% of all long-term smokers start as children.

We cannot wait another 50 years to eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco use. Unlike so many problems we face, we know how to end the tobacco epidemic. We have the tools. We know what policies and programs work; we simply haven't implemented them nearly enough. And there is no good excuse. They are not only affordable; they pay for themselves in terms of reduced health care costs and improved productivity.

The question we must ask ourselves today is not why have we accomplished so much, but why have we not accomplished more and what will it take for us do so.

The primary reason we have not accomplished more is the same today as it was in 1964. It is the behavior of the tobacco industry. Fifty years after the Surgeon General's 1964 report

- Cigarettes today are every bit as deadly, every bit as addictive, and even more appealing to children.
- The tobacco industry spends 8.8 billion a year – one million dollars an hour – marketing its products, much of it in ways to that make these products appealing and accessible to children; and
- The tobacco industry opposes every major policy that reduces tobacco use: from higher taxes to protection against secondhand smoke to effective warning labels.

Today, our organizations challenge government officials at every level to join with us by making the commitment to do what is necessary to cut tobacco use in half within the next decade.

The status quo is not acceptable. We must renew our commitment to eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco with urgency. We cannot and will not claim victory until every child is tobacco free - and it must not take another 50 years.