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For more information, contact:

Thomas Larson, Director of Public Information and Outreach

thomasl@tset.ok.gov

Cell: (405) 642-6860

YAHL Youth Meet with State Legislators

18 youth from across Oklahoma advocate for health policy change

OKLAHOMA CITY (Feb. 21, 2024) — Eighteen high school students from across Oklahoma met with 33 state legislators to advocate for a healthier Oklahoma at their annual Day at the Capitol. As members of the [Youth Action for Health Leadership](#) (YAHL) program, which is funded by the [Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust](#) (TSET), the youth promote a healthier Oklahoma through nutrition education and active living that is free from the harmful effects of tobacco addiction and obesity.

“It was really educational to talk to these legislators and learn about their thoughts and opinions and it was great to educate them and advocate for issues that are really important to me,” said Lacey Laymon, a Senior at Keys High School.

At the YAHL Day at the Capitol, high school students from Adair, Chelsea, Hennessey, Keys, Luther, Marlow, Muskogee, Oklahoma City, Purcell, Stilwell, Valliant and Westville represented over 1,200 YAHL members from around the state.

Youth in Oklahoma face increasing threats to health as rates of vaping use rise. More than one out of five Oklahoma youth report using some form of tobacco product. Oklahoma is one of 17 states without retail licensure for e-cigarettes, and state law in Oklahoma prohibits cities and towns from regulating tobacco and vape licensure, tobacco advertising or smoke-free indoor air.

Oklahoma also continues to have one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the nation. While weight does not equal health, children with obesity are more likely to develop chronic health conditions such as cardiovascular disease and Type 2 diabetes, mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression, lower self-esteem and self-reported lower quality of life.



The students met with 32 legislators including Senators Carri Hicks, Chuck Hall, Dana Prieto, Dewayne Pemberton, George Young, John Haste, Julia Kirt, Julie Daniels, Kay Floyd, Paul Rosino, and Tom Woods as well as Representatives Amanda Swope, Bob Culver, Carl Newton, Clay Staires, Chris Sneed, Cynthia Roe, Collin Duel, David Hardin, Ellyn Hefner, Jeff Boatman, John George, Kevin McDugle, Kevin Wallace, Kyle Hilbert, Melissa Provenzano, Meloyde Blancett, Neil Hays, Randy Randleman, Rusty Cornwell, Scott Fetgatter and Trish Ranson.

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The **TSET Healthy Youth Initiative** empowers youth to improve health outcomes for themselves and future generations. The initiative includes statewide public health education messaging, a youth-led advocacy program and character building to reduce tobacco use and obesity. The initiative also gives parents resources to support their children in maintaining or developing healthy habits for a lifetime.

Visit TSETHealthyYouth.com to learn more.

The **Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust (TSET)** serves as a partner and bridge builder for organizations shaping a healthier future for all Oklahomans. TSET provides leadership at the intersections of health by working with local coalitions and initiatives across the state, cultivating innovative and life-changing research and working across public and private sectors to develop, support, implement and evaluate creative strategies to take advantage of emerging opportunities to improve the public's health. To learn more, go to Oklahoma.gov/TSET.

TSET – Better Lives Through Better Health