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Media Contact:

Maurice Starks, National Network of Public Health Institutes, 202-836-7611, [mstarks@nnphi.org](mailto:mstarks@nnphi.org)

Rural communities continue to bear a disproportionate burden of tobacco-related health harms.

*New report is a valuable resource for those seeking to understand the unique challenges and opportunities of tobacco control efforts in rural communities.*

Washington, DC. – Today, the National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) in conjunction with the Maine Public Health Institute and the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) announced the release of *Advancing Tobacco Prevention and Control in Rural America*, a new report highlighting the significant toll tobacco has on rural communities.

“We know from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable disease, disability and death in the United States, and the health of people living in rural areas is impacted by tobacco use more so than those in urban and metropolitan areas,” said Vincent Lafronza, EdD, NNPHI President and CEO. “Given the disproportionate impact commercial tobacco has had on rural communities, we assembled a team to explore the rural context in greater depth, highlighting challenges and opportunities for improving rural health through tobacco prevention and control.”

A review committee of experts from 15 organizations contributed to the report that explores rates and patterns of commercial tobacco use across rural subpopulations, aspects of the rural context that may affect tobacco prevention and control efforts, and rural tobacco control activities. The report includes 15 recommendations for advancing rural tobacco control initiatives and suggestions for future research.

“Analyzing national data, we found marked rural-urban tobacco use disparities in many subpopulations,” said Jean Talbot, PhD, MPH, lead author of the report. “To arrive at a more complete understanding of these disparities, we explored not just sociodemographic risk factors but also rural infrastructure, policy environment, and cultural norms as possible contributing factors. In doing so, we identified core strengths of rural communities that can be leveraged to support rural tobacco prevention and control, including strong social networks, high levels of community engagement, and experience in forming cross-sector collaborations.”

“Across the country, rural communities are implementing ‘CDC Best Practices’ guidelines for tobacco use prevention and control, offering proven approaches that can be replicated and scaled to reduce the prevalence of commercial tobacco use and improve public health,” said Paula Clayton, MS, RDN, LD, NACDD consultant.

NNPHI is the lead planning partner for the upcoming 2019 National Conference on Tobacco or Health (NCTOH), an event that convenes tobacco control professionals from across the country to share insights and discuss trends. “We look forward to engaging stakeholders at NCTOH regarding

the findings and recommendations of this report,” said Christopher Kinabrew, MPH, MSW, Chief Strategy Officer. “Reducing the rural-urban disparities articulated in this report should motivate all of us who value health to ramp up efforts in prevention of initiation, cessation, and promotion of smoke-free air... while keeping rural context, culture and infrastructure in mind.”

To download *Advancing Tobacco Prevention and Control in Rural America* (full report and/or executive summary), visit [www.nnphi.org/ruraltobacco](http://www.nnphi.org/ruraltobacco). To learn more about NNPHI, visit [www.nnphi.org](http://www.nnphi.org). For more information about the 2019 NCTOH, visit [www.nctoh.org](http://www.nctoh.org).

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#### **About the National Network of Public Health Institutes**

The National Network of Public Health Institutes (NNPHI) is a technical, financial, professional, and information network that mobilizes more than 40 member public health institutes—along with university-based public health training centers. We connect more than 8,000 subject-matter experts with organizational partners across the United States and its territories, engaging our member institutes and partners at the local, state, tribal, territorial and national levels in efforts that result in measurable improvements in population health.

#### **About the Muskie School of Public Service at the University of Southern Maine**

The Muskie School of Public Service is Maine’s distinguished public policy school, combining an extensive applied research and technical assistance portfolio with rigorous undergraduate and graduate degree programs in public health; policy, planning, and management; geography-anthropology; and tourism and hospitality. The school is nationally recognized for applying innovative knowledge to policy and management issues in health and human services and for its work in the area of sustainable development. The Muskie School is home to the Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy, the Maine Public Health Institute, and the Maine Rural Health Research Center.

##### *Cutler Institute for Health and Social Policy*

The Cutler Institute is the research arm of the Muskie School. Cutler staff collaborate with communities and organizations in the United States and throughout the world to find sustainable, practical solutions to critical societal issues.

##### *Maine Public Health Institute*

The Maine Public Health Institute informs health and public health policy and system development through research, policy analysis, technical assistance, and training. The Institute is committed to effectively integrating the science, tools, and practices of public health and healthcare management to improve access, population health outcomes, and healthcare cost efficiencies.

##### *Maine Rural Health Research Center*

Established in 1992, the Maine Rural Health Research Center draws on the multidisciplinary faculty and research resources and capacity of the Cutler Institute within the Muskie School. The Center’s mission is to inform healthcare policymaking and the delivery of rural health services through high-quality, policy-relevant research, policy analysis, and technical assistance on rural health issues of regional and national significance.

#### **About the National Association of Chronic Disease Directors**

The National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) and its more than 7,000 members seek to strengthen state-based leadership and expertise for chronic disease prevention and control in states and nationally. Established in 1988, in partnership with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the NACDD is the only membership association of its kind to serve and represent every chronic disease division in all states and U.S. territories. For more information, visit [chronicdisease.org](http://chronicdisease.org).