



**Public Health Committee  
February 29, 2008  
Testimony of the American Cancer Society**

**HB 5448, An Act Concerning Tobacco Education Programs For Minors**

The American Cancer Society would like your support for **HB 5448, An Act Concerning Tobacco Education Programs For Minors.**

In Connecticut, there are approximately 60,000 middle and high school students that currently smoke. Every year, 48,000 Connecticut students reach the age of 11, which is the average age of eighth graders that begin to smoke. If this trend continues, 56,000 Connecticut youth will eventually die prematurely from smoking.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified four interventions that can have the greatest impact in reducing tobacco use. 1) Increasing the unit price for tobacco, 2) Smoking ban in bars and restaurants, 3) media campaigns, 4) comprehensive cessation programs. Connecticut has accomplished the first two of the interventions, but has yet to effectively implement the remaining two. This bill will work towards implementing the remaining interventions to reduce tobacco use.

Effective education programs, along with the other initiatives are effective in reducing tobacco use. For example, New York City, from 2002 to 2003, experienced the most significant one-year drop in tobacco use ever recorded. New York City credited this drop to the effective implementation of all four of the CDC's recommendations. Other states, such as Florida and California, initiated statewide tobacco education media campaigns that were highly effective in reducing the number of people that began to smoke.

HB 4558 will implement tobacco education programs targeted at youth even before they start to smoke. These programs need to illustrate to our youth the harmful effects of smoking in a manner that continues throughout their elementary and middle school years. It is apparent that any current education programs are ineffective, 22.5% of younger adults (18-24 years of age) and high school students smoke, compared to 18.6 of adults that smoke.

It has been estimated that the economic cost of smoking for the State of Connecticut was \$2.14 billion. If we can institute programs such as the ones that are recommended in this legislation we can reduce the amount of individuals that begin to smoke, and effectively reduce the amount that the state pays towards treating smokers.

Please support this legislation so that no more of our youth begin this dangerous habit.