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**HB #5608: An Act Concerning the Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos that Permit Smoking in the Casinos
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My name is Dr. Pat Checko. I am the Chairman of the MATCH Coalition; Mobilizing Against Tobacco for Connecticut's Health. I am here to speak in opposition to HB 5608 as currently written. As a retired Director of Health and former DPH epidemiologist, I can tell you that smoking in casinos is a public health problem that only a total ban on smoking can alleviate. While I applaud the leadership of the Southern legislative delegation in bringing this bill forward, it just does not go far enough to protect the health of the casino workers and patrons.

I won't go through the health data on tobacco and a myriad of diseases. We all know it. Nor will I recite the litany of secondhand smoke and the carcinogens and chemicals associated with it. We also know that too well. We all agree in 2003 that the right thing to do was to prohibit smoking in public places – and you did. Connecticut's Clean Indoor Act was a victory for workers' rights and a healthier work environment, whether they work in a restaurant or bar, Wal-Mart or Macy's or the former smoke filled legislative caucus rooms.

As much as we have accomplished, some sacrifices were made to pass the Clean Air Act. In 2003, some exemptions were made to the law so it would pass. These included Connecticut's casinos, private clubs and small businesses. It's time to rethink the reasonableness of such exemptions and the safety of the workers involved.

In a special report on secondhand smoke in casinos, Berman and Post writing for the Tobacco Legal Consortium cited a 1998 study that found that casino workers in so-called 'well-ventilated' casinos had metabolized nicotine levels that were 300 to 600% higher than those in other smoking workplaces during a work shift. There is in fact NO SAFE LEVEL of ETS and even sophisticated ventilation systems are ineffective in protecting both patrons and employees.

ASHRAE (The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-conditioning Engineers) is the preeminent U.S. body on ventilation issues. In their position paper "Environmental Tobacco Smoke" they concluded that "ventilation technology cannot be relied on to control health risk from secondhand smoke exposure" and that "the only way to effectively eliminate health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity".

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