



**Public Health Committee Hearing
Friday March 6, 2009**

Raised Bill No. 6616: An Act Establishing Wood Smoke To Be A Public Nuisance

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and Members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Leslie Balch and I am the Director of Health for the Quinipiack Valley Health District (QVHD), a regional health department serving the Towns of Bethany, Hamden, North Haven and Woodbridge.

I am here today to speak in support of Raised Bill Number 6616. The addition of wood smoke emissions as a specific condition constituting a public nuisance will give me, as health director, a much needed legal tool with which to perform my duties. Section 206 of the CT General Statutes requires local health directors to investigate all nuisances injurious to health, and to cause them to be abated or remediated. It goes on to clarify that to be deemed a public nuisance, it must violate the provisions of the Public Health Code. Presently, a violation for residential wood smoke emissions does not exist in the CT Public Health code.

QVHD has responded to at least 5 wood smoke complaints over the past 2 years and it is very frustrating to investigate a complaint about; observe conditions which are known to be detrimental to health; and fear that our best efforts to protect may be thwarted because there is no provision in the Public Health Code to cite. Yet, upon observing certain conditions for food, rodents, stagnant water, the keeping of animals, garbage, and general sanitation (to name a few), local health departments can determine if a public nuisance exists and subsequently enforce the Public Health Code - because they are regulated. I believe certain conditions of wood smoke emissions also need to be regulated.

This amendment to the Public Health Code will give local health directors the tools to respond reasonably when wood smoke emissions may be injurious to the health of neighbors by entering their living space.

Thank you.

Quinipiack Valley Health District

A Regional Health Department Serving Bethany, Hamden, North Haven and Woodbridge, CT

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