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Protecting Connecticut's Health

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**Testimony in Support of Raised House Bill 5449: An Act Concerning the Retail Sale of Cigarettes and Tobacco Products**  
**March 12, 2010**

My name is Dr. Pat Checko. I am Chairman of the statewide MATCH Coalition (Mobilizing Against Tobacco for Connecticut's Health). MATCH supports raised bill 5449 that restricts the self-service display of cigarettes or tobacco products for purchase.

At one time, cigarette vending machines could be found in vestibules, lobbies and restrooms of many businesses. Legislation restricting their placement of cigarette has had a positive impact on access to cigarettes by minors. Requiring that vendor maintain cigarettes behind a counter, will also reduce both the perception and the reality of the availability of tobacco from commercial sources to our youth. In studies of communities that adopted a self-service ban vs. control communities, the intervention resulted in a lower prevalence of smoking across grades 8 through 10. There was also a decrease in the perceived availability from commercial sources, as well as a decrease in purchase attempts.

Connecticut already has a number of regulations in place including the requirement to display age-of sale information. In the past year, DMHAS has also conducted an intensive merchant and community education programs. Training for merchants was conducted in English, Urdu and Spanish. After a disturbing increase in sales to minors of 14% in 2007, the 2009 retailer violation rate was 9.7%. This dramatic reduction was also aided by the enforcement of laws by DMHAS and DRS, as well as by the dedication of those merchants who invested in the wellness of their communities.

There are 4,293 tobacco merchants in Connecticut. Putting their cigarettes behind the counter and requiring assistance from retail personnel to purchase them is one more arrow in the quiver to keep our underage children from obtaining them.

**MOBILIZE AGAINST TOBACCO FOR CONNECTICUT'S HEALTH**