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Statement of Karen Bentlage
President, Future Industries, Inc.
before the
Public Health Committee
Senate Bill 263
March 1, 2010

Sen. Harris, Rep. Ritter and members of the committee:

My name is Karen Bentlage. I am president and owner of Future Industries, Inc., a major national distributor of sun tanning equipment and products. We employ 40 people and are located in Milford. I started the company in 1990 after years of managing and owning indoor sun tanning facilities here in Connecticut.

I would like to offer comments on Senate Bill 263, *An Act Requiring Tanning Facilities to Provide Notification of the Health Risks Associated with the Use of Tanning Devices*. The legislation requires that a warning sign be displayed about the 'health risks associated' with sun tanning and that customers sign a written document acknowledging that they have been informed of that fact.

We want consumers to have the widest range of information possible about sun exposure both indoors and out. We educate and advise customers individually as to their skin type, recommended exposure time, and what frequency is best for them.

We are very pro-active in the "Smart Tan Educational Program" and closely monitor the sun tanning habits of our customers. If someone presents who is showing any signs of over exposure, we'll suggest they hold off on further exposure for several days.

The bottom-line is we care about our customers. We offer a controlled environment with complete limits on maximum exposure time. We want our clients to sun tan responsibly and have a good experience with us.

There are several issues with SB 263 that I would like to address.

- The bill requires a warning sign to be displayed. We already have that, however. It is mandated by the federal Food and Drug Administration with a warning statement affixed to each sun tanning unit. The bill's requirement is duplicative. Also, it would appear to prevent a salon from detailing the positive health effects of sun tanning such as Vitamin D generation.

- The bill requires that other information be included on the warning sign, too. This includes instructions for using the sun tanning unit and a notice that customer complaints can be made to the Department of Consumer Protection. These rules would make the sign “text heavy” and defeat its purpose. I might say that we show each customer how to properly use the equipment. A written guide sheet is also provided with each tanning unit.
- The bill also requires that a customer sign a statement that contains information about possible overexposure to UV rays. We already do that—it is in our standard agreement that the customer signs at the initial visit. But, again, we are constantly talking to our customers about moderate UV exposure. This type of education is an integral part of our customer relationships—it is much more than just signing a piece of paper. The bill’s requirement is also duplicative.
- Finally, SB 263 states that both the warning sign and customer statement need to be approved by the local health director in the town where the indoor sun facility is located. This is a prescription for disaster—we could have 169 different directives. At a minimum, we are entitled to have some uniform standard to work off.

We realize there has been a heightened interest in this issue as a result of a recent report by the World Health Organization. Essentially, the report concluded that some individuals, particularly those who are fair-skinned, might be susceptible to a higher risk of melanoma from exposure to ultraviolet rays. Frankly, we’ve know that for years and it is a major reason for our “Smart Tan Educational Program”. Exposure to natural sunlight also needs to be done in moderation. I have attached to this testimony ITA’s analysis of the WHO report.

Members of the committee, we understand your concern about the health effects of indoor sun tanning. I will be happy to talk to you about this at more length. Let me just say that we are mindful of this also; we put our customer’s health and well-being first. We want to ensure our customers’ safety and that they have an enjoyable experience.

The bill would mandate things we already do. It provides duplication and rules that are unnecessary and unworkable. But, SB 263 could not come at a worse time for us. The economy has hit our industry hard and this bill will make a tough situation just that much more difficult. Thank you.



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Putting the IARC/WHO Report in Perspective

- Sun beds have been categorized as “Group 1” by a group of scientists working for the World Health Organization. The mission statement of this organization is to identify adverse health outcomes of excessive UV exposure. They acknowledge that no attempt is made to balance the equation by addressing the many adverse health outcomes of too little UV exposure.
- “Group 1” classification puts sunbeds in the same category as sunlight which means there is evidence that the use of sun beds can increase the risk of skin cancer.
- The information is not very new: sunlight has been in that category since 1992. Just like sunlight, the light from sun beds has UV rays that cause your skin to produce melanin.
- Since 1992, thousands of doctors have recommended moderate exposure to sunlight for a variety of health benefits. Oprah guest Dr. Oz Mehmet and Dr. Andrew Weil are two prominent examples.
- The “Group 1” category does not classify the **size** of the risk that is associated with a particular substance. This means that things are placed in the “Group 1” category if there is **any** risk associated with that substance. Some things in the category are very dangerous, like arsenic and mustard gas. Other substances only carry a very small risk, like red wine, beer, and salted fish.
- News stories that say things like “sun-tanning is as dangerous as arsenic” are flat-out wrong. The scientists have not made that kind of comparison at all; this comparison is made only by reporters looking for a scary headline.
- The IARC is a group of scientists that works with the United Nations. Their report is not a new study; it is a review of a paper from 2006, which itself was a review of 23 studies, some dating to the early 1980s. Those studies had a wide range of findings.
- Some news stories are including a misleading statistic: that sun beds increase the risk of melanoma by 75%. This number comes from a study with questionable methods. The study’s authors admit that they did not adjust for factors like outside sun exposure and sun sensitivity. Even if the study is accurate, it does **not** mean that 75% of sun bed users will get melanoma, it means that their relative risk is higher. Because the issue is **relative** risk, when the original risk is very small, a percentage increase that looks large actually translates into a very small added risk.
- **National Cancer Institute** - “In epidemiologic research, relative risks of less than 2 are considered small and usually difficult to interpret. Such increases may be due to chance, statistical bias or effects of confounding factors that are sometimes not evident.” – National Cancer Institute, “Abortion and possible risk for breast cancer: analysis and inconsistencies,” October 26, 1994