

Memo to Public Health Committee
RE: Proposed Senate Bill No. 415

From: Constance E. Young EdD, RN
Chairperson: Milford Board of Health
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My concerns about Hookah lounges mirror those stated by the Tolland Planning and Zoning Commission in denying the opening of a hookah lounge in their community. They stated that the “communal smoking establishment was contrary to the panel’s goal of promoting the health, safety and welfare of the community”(Hartford Courant 1/12/11)

My concerns and those of the Milford Board of Health are as described above. The Board of Health unanimously (one abstention) voted on January 18, 2011. “That the Board of Health support that opening of the Hookah Lounge is deleterious to the health and welfare of Milford citizens and as such that the Planning and Zoning Board should not support its opening.”

To cite specific concerns:

1. There is no documented method for sanitizing the non-disposable hookah set up and the hookah pipe based on discussions with health care professionals and review for information on the CDC site. This lack of a clear sanitation protocol increases the health risk for transferable diseases such as tuberculosis.
2. There is concern about the direct health risks from heating the tobacco in the hookah. As noted by the CDC: “The charcoal used to heat tobacco in the hookah increases the health risks by producing high levels of carbon monoxide, metals and cancer-causing chemicals.” (http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/tobacco_industry/hookahs/) The concern about high levels of carbon monoxide would logically increase as the number of smokers increase and this raises questions about the adequacy of ventilation to accommodate the anticipated increase in carbon monoxide levels.
3. The ingredients used in smoking a hookah are untested and not regulated which have undetermined health effects on the smoker as well as the potential negative effect from second hand smoke. For example, in researching the ingredients used in a hookah pipe one Internet site referenced Hydro Herbal Molasses tobacco and described it as made with the “finest premium organic herbs and flavors.” <http://www.hookah-shisha.com/hookahlove/1047-hydro-herbal-molasses-tobacco-free-shisha-for-your-hookah.html>
4. If tobacco is used in smoking a hookah the levels of nicotine are reported to be higher than in cigarettes.

In conclusion I reiterate that the health concerns for hookah smoking are strong and evidence based. Therefore, I strongly support passage of the Proposed Senate Bill # 415

Thank you.