Public Health Committee
March 11, 2011
American Cancer Society Testimony

RE: SB 948 – An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Workplaces.

The American Cancer Society strongly supports **SB 948 – An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Workplaces.**

Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemical compounds. More than 60 of these are known or suspected to cause cancer. Secondhand smoke is classified as a "known human carcinogen" (cancer-causing agent) by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the US National Toxicology Program, and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a branch of the World Health Organization.

Secondhand smoke can cause harm in many ways. In the United States alone, each year it is responsible for an estimated 46,000 deaths from heart disease in non-smokers who live with smokers and about 3,400 lung cancer deaths in non-smoking adults. These deaths occur because tobacco users are not the only ones who breathe smoke—all the people around them inhale it too. Non-smokers who breathe in secondhand smoke take in nicotine and other toxic chemicals just like smokers do. The more secondhand smoke you are exposed to, the higher the level of these harmful chemicals in your body.

Secondhand smoke is responsible for 50,000 to 300,000 lung infections (such as pneumonia and bronchitis) in children younger than 18 months of age, which result in 7,500 to 15,000 hospitalizations annually. Exposure increases the number and severity of asthma attacks in about 200,000 to 1 million children who have asthma and causes 750,000 middle ear infections in children. Pregnant women exposed to secondhand smoke are also at increased risk of having low birth-weight babies.

The total annual costs of secondhand smoke exposure are estimated to be at least $5 billion in direct medical costs and at least $5 billion in indirect costs.

The workplace is a major source of secondhand smoke exposure for adults. Secondhand smoke meets the standard to be classified as a potential cancer-causing agent by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the federal agency responsible for health and safety regulations in the workplace. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), another federal agency, also recommends that secondhand smoke be considered a possible carcinogen in the workplace. Because there are no known safe levels, they recommend that exposures to secondhand smoke be reduced to the lowest possible levels.

Separating smokers from non-smokers, cleaning the air, and ventilating the building cannot prevent exposure if people still smoke inside the building. No ventilation system can completely remove the cancer-causing and toxic chemicals in secondhand smoke.

The 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's Report, *"The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Secondhand Smoke,"* concluded that ventilation and smoking rooms cannot control exposure to secondhand smoke. Since the landmark report's release, the Institute of Medicine and the U.S. President's Cancer Panel have both endorsed 100% smokefree indoor policies, free of loopholes, to protect workers and patrons from developing adverse health effects due to exposure.

In 2005, the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the international standard-setting body for indoor air quality and ventilation, adopted a position document on approaches to controlling secondhand smoke, which states unequivocally, that "the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity."

Many ventilation system manufacturers themselves put second hand smoke disclaimers on their own products and cigarette maker Philip Morris cedes this fact on their own website.

The American Cancer Society believes the only way to protect worker and customer health from the dangers of tobacco is by creating 100% smoke free environments. Going 100% smokefree not only protects employees and patrons, but also protects business owners' bottom line for both the short and long terms. Studies indicate each employee that smokes costs employers in excess of $4000 per year in excess absenteeism, higher insurance premiums, pension benefits and lost productivity.

Nearly seven years ago, opponents of Connecticut's landmark Clean Indoor Air Act argued that businesses would close, employees would quit, employers would have a hard time hiring new employees and businesses would have difficulty attracting customers as a result of the Act. After looking at the facts, it is clear that these concerns about the business costs of smoke-free policies were unfounded. The facts are that smoke-free laws are good for businesses; they're good for the people who frequent them; and they're good for the people who work in them. Research published in leading, scientific journals has consistently and conclusively shown that smoke-free laws have no adverse effects on businesses, and, in fact, can actually be good for business.

At a time when there is great concern about retaining and attracting businesses to the state, small businesses considering relocation to Connecticut might think twice because of these additional costs.

Eliminating the current exemption would allow these small businesses to use the savings seen by lower insurance and lower health care costs to possibly reinvest into the business, expand operations or hire more employees. In short, this is a win-win solution for businesses, employees and customers as well as Connecticut itself.

While consumers can choose in which establishments they spend their time and money, workers often do not have the same choice. The American Cancer Society believes that no one should have to choose between a job and good health. Therefore, the American Cancer Society strongly believes that a 100% smoke free environment will provide for better working conditions; help ease the health care crisis burden on all of Connecticut's citizens and most importantly save lives. Please support SB 948.

Thank you.

####