

Heart Disease and Stroke. You're the Cure.



Testimony of the Connecticut American Heart Association

In Support of Raised Bill 948: An Act Concerning Smoking in Workplaces

To the Distinguished Co-Chairs and Members of the Public Health Committee

March 11, 2011

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

The American Heart Association enthusiastically supports SB 948 – An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Workplaces.

Nearly seven years ago the landmark Connecticut Clean Indoor Air Act took a major step toward protecting most Connecticut workers from exposure to secondhand smoke in the workplace. At that time, opponents argued that businesses would close, employees would quit and that employers would have difficulty filling vacant positions; we now know that these concerns were and are unfounded. Furthermore, while customers may have a degree of choice with regard to where they spend their time and money, employees do not and the effects of secondhand smoke are not different based on the number of employees.

Estimates are that exposure to second hand smoke causes between 21,800-75,100 coronary heart disease (CHD) deaths and 38,100-128,900 myocardial infarctions (MIs) annually. Long-term exposure to second hand smoke, such as that occurring in a home or workplace, is associated with a 25%–30% increased risk for coronary heart disease in adult nonsmokers. Furthermore there are other health impacts of second hand smoke. A recent study linked exposure to dementia in adults. Those people exposed to high levels of passive smoking were 44% more likely to suffer cognitive impairment, affecting their memory and ability to perform calculations. In infants and children, second hand smoke is a risk factor for heightened asthma attacks, acute respiratory illness, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, and ear infections. Pregnant women exposed to second hand smoke show a greater risk of giving birth to low-birth-weight babies.

Additionally, there is increasing evidence that comprehensive smoke free laws lower cardiovascular disease incidence and significantly improve public health. The health care costs associated with disease incidence caused by second hand smoke exposure are estimated at \$1.8-6.0 billion. If recent trends in the reduction in the prevalence of passive smoking continue, the health and economic burden of passive smoking in the U.S. would be reduced by approximately 25%–30%. This potential reduction has important ramifications for lowering Medicare, Medicaid, and private insurance costs. There are important economic arguments for these laws as well. The hospitality and tobacco industries often promote the idea that business will suffer after these laws are passed. However, increasing evidence from municipalities, states, and countries where these laws have been passed show no significant impact on sales data and in



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many instances business actually increases. Additional benefits for businesses are lower cleaning costs, lower worker absenteeism, and increased productivity.

The fact is that closing the loophole in the Clean Indoor Act that allows businesses with fewer than five employees to provide an unhealthy workplace for their employees SB 948 is good for employees, employers, the public and Connecticut.

The American Heart Association thanks you for your support.

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