



**Public Health Committee
February 23, 2011
American Cancer Society Testimony**

**S.B. No. 972 - An Act Protecting Minors From The Health Risks
Associated With The Use Of Tanning Devices.**

The American Cancer Society supports legislative and regulatory initiatives at all levels of government to protect the public from increased skin cancer risk associated with exposure to ultraviolet radiation emitted by sun-tanning facilities. ***More specifically, based on a review of the recent literature, the American Cancer Society supports initiatives that would prohibit minors' use of sun-tanning facilities due to the link between the use of sun-tanning facilities during the teen years and twenties to an increase in the risk for skin cancer.***

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States, with melanoma as one of the most common cancers diagnosed among young adults. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure from the sun is a known cause of skin cancer, and UV radiation exposure during childhood and adolescence increases the risk factor for a skin cancer diagnosis as an adult. While the scientific evidence concerning artificial UV radiation exposure, such as the use of sun-tanning facilities, among the general population is not clear, a meta-analysis published in the *International Journal of Cancer* found an increase in the risk for melanoma in people who first used sun-tanning facilities in their teen years and twenties. The study was a review of 19 informative studies. The authors strongly suggested restrictions on the use of sun-tanning facilities by minors. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention concluded that avoiding the use of sun-tanning facilities is an effective way to reduce exposure to UV radiation in their *Guidelines for School Health Programs: Preventing Skin Cancer Among Young People*.

Additionally, in the summer of 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) raised the classification of UV-emitting indoor tanning devices to the highest level of cancer risk — Group 1 — “carcinogenic to humans”. The raise in classification was largely based on the scientific findings of its 2006 meta-analysis, which concluded that individuals who used indoor tanning devices before the age of 30 increase their risk for melanoma by 75 percent. The link between UV exposure from indoor tanning devices and melanoma is consistent with what we already know about the association between UV exposure from the sun and skin cancer.

Also troubling is there is a general misconception among adults and teens about the potential health harms of using indoor tanning devices. There is a false belief that a “base tan” obtained by using indoor tanning devices will have a protective effect from excessive sun exposure. Additionally, more than half of adolescents who use an indoor tanning

device also reported sunburns after use. A history of sunburns can increase a person's risk for melanoma by twofold.

Finally, the 2006 IARC meta-analysis concluded that vitamin D deficient individuals could receive needed doses through minimal sun exposure or through dietary sources. Indoor tanning devices may not be useful in providing adequate sources of vitamin D to individuals who are deficient because: (1) consumers cannot assess the UVB exposure they are receiving for vitamin D synthesis, (2) the greater expense and inconvenience compared to dietary sources of vitamin D, and (3) that use of indoor tanning devices pose additional health risks, including increased risk for melanoma.

The American Cancer Society supports a comprehensive approach to reducing the incidence and mortality of skin cancer in the United States through research, education, advocacy, and service. The American Cancer Society aims to educate children, teens, parents and other adults on how to reduce their risk for skin cancer by providing information on sun safety and the risks associated with tanning bed use. Additionally, we support efforts to prohibit minors from using tanning beds, to ensure that all consumers are warned of the risk prior to use, to ensure indoor tanning devices are properly regulated, and that effective enforcement provisions are in place.

#####