

**Testimony by Philip Kerr, MD, FAAD on behalf of the
American Academy of Dermatology Association
Connecticut Dermatology & Dermatologic Surgery Society
Connecticut State Medical Society**

To the Connecticut Public Health Committee

**In Support of SB 54 An Act Concerning The Use Of Indoor Tanning Devices By Persons
Under Eighteen Years Of Age.**

March 7, 2012

Good morning Senator Gerrantana, Representative Ritter and other distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Public Health. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today for the record my name is Dr. Philip Kerr and I am a board certified dermatologist and President of the Connecticut Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society and I am here representing the American Academy of Dermatology, the Connecticut Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society and the Connecticut State Medical Society in support of SB54.

Today's discussion is very important for two reasons: 1) we now have the scientific evidence to show a definitive link between indoor tanning and the development of skin cancer; and 2) this legislation has the potential to save lives.

The tanning industry, much like the tobacco industry did with cigarettes, consistently attempts to discredit the large body of scientific evidence available on this topic.

Despite what you may hear from opponents of this bill today, the causal relationship between UV radiation from tanning beds and the development of skin cancer is based on data from numerous scientific research studies. **And the science is clear – if you use indoor tanning beds, your risk of developing skin cancer significantly increases.** It's important to note that several newer studies reconfirm the link between use of indoor tanning beds and the development of skin cancer and have controlled for other risk factors, including sunburn.

No amount of UV exposure from tanning beds is safe. There is no such thing as a safe tan. By definition a tan is evidence of skin damage.

A recently published study found indoor tanners have a 69 percent increased risk of developing the most common form of skin cancer, basal cell carcinoma, even if a person only used a tanning bed once in their lifetime. More alarming, risk was even higher for those who began indoor tanning at younger ages.

When it comes to the deadliest form of skin cancer, melanoma, research shows a person who has used tanning beds for more than 50 hours is two and a half to three times more likely to develop this form of cancer than a person who has never tanned indoors.

National rates of indoor tanning rates for 14 year-old girls is 8.5%, for 15 year old girls it is 13.6%, for 16 year old girls it is 20.9% and for 17 year-old girls it is 26.8%. The tanning industry consistently targets teenage girls in their print and online advertisements and the rate of indoor tanning among adolescent girls is significantly higher than the rate among adolescent boys. A growing body of scientific research has determined that this phenomenon likely explains the recent rise in melanoma incidence among young US women; currently women under the age of 39 have a higher probability of developing melanoma than any other cancer except breast cancer.

According to a survey conducted in 2011 by the American Academy of Dermatology Association, 43 percent of indoor tanners reported that they have never been warned about the dangers of tanning beds by tanning salon employees. When asked if they were aware of any warning labels on tanning beds, 30 percent of indoor tanners said no. By age group, younger tanning bed users (ages 14 to 17) were more likely to be unaware of any warning labels on tanning beds than older tanners (ages 18 to 22).

Despite the fact that the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer have classified UV radiation from tanning devices as carcinogenic and in the same category as cigarettes, a number of younger tanning bed users still think tanning beds are safer than the sun. Specifically, younger tanning bed users aged 14 to 17 are more than twice as likely to think tanning beds are safer than the sun than older tanners age 18 to 22 and more than three times as likely to think that tanning beds do not cause skin cancer.

On February 1st, the US Energy and Commerce Committee released an investigative report detailing the false and misleading health information provided to teens by the indoor tanning industry. The report had five main findings:

1. 90 percent of tanning salons denied the known risks of indoor tanning. Salons described the suggestion of a link between indoor tanning and skin cancer as a myth, a rumor or hype.
2. Four out of five salons falsely claimed that indoor tanning is beneficial to a young person's health.
3. Salons used many approaches to downplay the health risks of indoor tanning, including blaming the use of sunscreen as the reason for rising rates of skin cancer in the US.
4. Tanning salons fail to follow the US Food and Drug Administration's recommendations on tanning frequency of no more than three visits in the first week and a minimum of 24 hours between tanning sessions.
5. Tanning salons target teenage girls in their print and online advertisements.

This report confirms what dermatologists have known for years – the tanning industry manipulates its customers for financial gain. Existing state parental consent laws are neither working nor being enforced. Stronger laws are needed to provide oversight of this industry and protect our state's youth.

The concept of prohibiting use of carcinogenic or dangerous products is not new. We do not have parental consent permission for the use of cigarettes or alcohol for teenagers. We should not make an exception for indoor tanning.

We have to reduce the amount of cumulative exposure our youth have to UV radiation – particularly intentional exposure via commercial indoor tanning. Use of tanning beds increases with each year of adolescence. We need to protect all teens from the health risks associated with indoor tanning and this is why it's important for this Committee to pass Senate Bill 54.

The medical community needs the support of the Committee and the full Connecticut state legislature to help educate teens and parents alike about the dangers of indoor tanning.

On behalf of the Connecticut Dermatology and Dermatologic Surgery Society and the American Academy of Dermatology Association, and the Connecticut State Medical Society I strongly urge you to pass Senate Bill 54.

Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.