



Public Health Committee
March 7, 2012
American Cancer Society Testimony

HB 5332 – An Act Concerning Smoking in Public Buildings and the Exemption for Tobacco Bars

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.

Smoking related diseases are the single most preventable cause of death in our society. Tobacco use accounts for 1/3 of all cancer deaths, including lung, oral, throat, esophagus, pancreas, cervix, kidney, bladder, and stomach cancers. It also accounts for cardiovascular, pulmonary, and cerebrovascular deaths. Connecticut has demonstrated leadership in establishing a clean indoor air law and by levying taxes on tobacco products. These have helped to decrease use rates and improve the quality of the air we breathe.

Secondhand smoke causes between 35,000 and 40,000 deaths from heart disease every year. 3,000 otherwise healthy nonsmokers will die of lung cancer annually because of their exposure to secondhand smoke. These deaths occur because tobacco users are not the only ones who breathe smoke—all the people around them inhale it too. 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. Therefore, to protect those who choose not to smoke and to reduce the costs associated with treating tobacco-related disease, the American Cancer Society has always been on the forefront of efforts to pass smoke-free air policies that restrict the places where people can light up.

In order to secure support for the Clean Indoor Air Act in 2002-2003, accommodations had to be made and exemptions established that remain in place to this day. The Act exempts prisons, public housing, small businesses of fewer than five employees, private clubs, designated areas in psychiatric facilities and casinos, among others. The Act also provides a grandfather clause for tobacco bars with an alcohol permit that were in existence prior to December 31, 2002 whose annual gross income from the on-site sale of tobacco was at least 10%.

Over the years, the majority of the few tobacco bars that qualified for this exemption have closed, leaving only one still in operation, according to the Dept. of Consumer Protection. Being the only bar in the state that possesses a café license while legally selling and allowing the use of tobacco products on the premises gives this bar a competitive advantage no one else can have.

HB 5332 intends to reduce smoking in public places by addressing the circumstances around this unique tobacco bar exemption to the Clean Indoor Air Act. Unfortunately while intending to address this narrow circumstance, it would inadvertently create the unintended consequence of opening the door to the establishment of new tobacco bars. As such, the American Cancer Society opposes HB 5332 in its current form. We would welcome the opportunity to work with this committee and the proponents of the bill to develop language that matches the intent of the bill.

There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke; therefore, the American Cancer Society is supportive of efforts to strengthen the Clean Indoor Air Act and we are hopeful for an opportunity during the longer session to make it stronger and even more effective. The Society strongly believes that a smoke free environment will provide for better conditions for both patrons and employees; help ease the health care crisis burden on all of Connecticut's citizens and most importantly save lives.

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