

Testimony By:

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RE; An Act Prohibiting Smoking in Motor Vehicles with Minor Children

These are the facts concerning smoking and the adverse effect that smoking has not only on adults but also the children who are exposed to cigarette smoke.

Smoking

Cigarette smoking is the number one cause of preventable disease and death worldwide. Smoking-related diseases claim over 393,000 American lives each year. Smoking cost the United States over \$193 billion in 2004, including \$97 billion in lost productivity and \$96 billion in direct health care expenditures, or an average of \$4,260 per adult smoker.¹

Secondhand Smoke and Children

- Secondhand smoke is especially harmful to young children. Secondhand smoke is responsible for between 150,000 and 300,000 lower respiratory tract infections in infants and children under 18 months of age, resulting in between 7,500 and 15,000 hospitalizations each year, and causes 430 sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) deaths in the U.S. annually.¹⁰
- Secondhand smoke exposure may cause buildup of fluid in the middle ear, resulting in 790,000 physician office visits per year.¹¹ Secondhand smoke can also aggravate symptoms in 400,000 to 1,000,000 children with asthma.¹²
- In the United States, 21 million, or 35 percent of, children live in homes where residents or visitors smoke in the home on a regular basis.¹³ Approximately 50-75 percent of children in the United States have detectable levels of cotinine, the breakdown product of nicotine in the blood.¹⁴

Effects of Passive Smoking on Children

There are several adverse effects of smoking on infants and children. The children who are exposed to passive smoking at home:

- are twice likely to be susceptible to bronchiolitis, pneumonia or bronchitis. In the United States, secondhand smoke is responsible for more than 300,000 cases of pneumonia and bronchitis in infants and children.
- Will most likely to have under developed lungs. Their lungs have a reduced ability to function properly.
- Will most likely suffer from severe attacks of asthma.
- Are susceptible to develop asthma if they have not inherited the disease.
- Are at a risk of being hospitalized even before they turn 2 years-old.
- Are susceptible to “glue ear”, chronic middle ear disease, fluid in the ears and ear infections. These can lead to hearing loss in children. Due to secondhand smoking, many children may require surgical drainage of fluid from their ears.
- Will suffer from a loss of smell.
- Are at a higher risk of developing cancer in their adulthood.
- Are at risk of suffering from possible cardiovascular diseases.
- Are susceptible to die from cot death. When a pregnant woman smokes, she puts her child twice as high at risk of dying from cot death.

American Lung Association: source

What the Researches say about it?

- Research has revealed that infants and children, who grow up in a smoke-filled household, have a greater risk of respiratory and lung disorders.
- These kids are mostly absent from school more often when compared with those kids who grow up in a smoke-free home.
- Some studies say that kids who are exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and they may not develop mentally as quickly as other children.
- Children suffering from asthma, who reside in homes where one parent indulges in smoking are twice as likely, than asthmatic children whose parents do not smoke, to be absent from school due to some respiratory illness.
- Studies reveal that even if a child does not suffer from any symptoms of asthma, but both their parents smoke, they will most likely have 40% higher probability of bunking school due to some breathing problem.
- Children who are continuously exposed to passive smoking may not develop proper learning abilities.
- Children exposed to passive smoking can easily develop conflictive attitude towards their teachers and elders.

These are the facts concerning children's exposure to second hand smoke. Of course these figures do not deal with the issues concerning children exposed to smoke in small confined spaces which only further exacerbate the matter. The facts only support the truth that is already known that smoking is harmful to one's health. Smoking leads to death. These are truths that are irrefutable. But the real truth that is often overlooked is not what happens to one's health or even what happens to the child when exposed to cigarette smoke, but rather the defenseless nature of children to advocate for themselves.

Children often do not have a voice. We must be a voice for the children. This bill has nothing to do with punishment as it does with awareness. We are not seeking to legislate against recreational behavior, with regards to smoking. We are only asking this house to consider that smokers need to act more responsibly and not put our children in harm's way. Punishment is not when we ask smokers to consider the children. The real punishment is watching a child suffer from asthma, chronic bronchitis, cancer, and even premature death. That is the real punishment—one that no of us should be willing to risk.

