



**Testimony of the Connecticut Children's Medical Center  
to the Transportation Committee Regarding  
*House Bill 5380 An Act Prohibiting Smoking In Motor Vehicles With Minor Children.***

**February 20, 2013**

Senator Maynard, Representative Guerrero, members of the Transportation Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts about *House Bill 5380 An Act Prohibiting Smoking In Motor Vehicles With Minor Children*. My name is Dr. Michelle Cloutier. I am a pediatric lung specialist and a Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Connecticut Health Center. I am also the Director of the Asthma Center and the Children's Center for Community Research at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center. I am submitting this testimony in support of the proposed legislation.

Asthma is the most common chronic disease of children and the leading cause of school absenteeism. Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at greater risk both for the development of asthma and for asthma exacerbations. Of the 113,000 Connecticut children enrolled in the state-funded asthma management program called *Easy Breathing*, almost 35% with asthma report exposure to secondhand smoke as compared to 19% of the children without asthma. In addition, asthma severity is greater for children who report secondhand smoke exposure as compared to children without environmental tobacco smoke exposure. Finally, children exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to be hospitalized for influenza and to have more severe illness.

Worldwide, more than 600,000 people die each year as a result of secondhand smoke exposure. Secondhand smoke in cars is especially harmful to children. Concentrations of particulate matter in secondhand cigarette smoke are higher in cars than in a smoky bar or restaurant because of the car's confined space. Even with the windows in the car open, the levels remain high. Smoking bans in public places have resulted in improved lung function in bar and restaurant workers, decreased rates of premature births and an 18% reduction in admissions to the hospital for asthma attacks in children. Banning smoking in cars is not associated with increased exposure of children in the home. Public support for a ban is high even from smokers.

Smoke-free car laws are now in effect in at least 4 other states and several other states are considering imposing similar bans. Such bans have been implemented in Canada, in Australia and are being considered in numerous other countries. To protect our children, a smoking ban in motor vehicles with children is prudent and timely.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. If you have any questions about this testimony, please contact Jane Baird, Connecticut Children's Director of Government Relations, at 860-837-5557.