

**Statement of
Bob Heffernan
before the
Committee on Public Health
on
Senate Bill 872
Banning Indoor Tanning for Minors**

Bob is a stage 4 melanoma patient residing in New Milford, who is a patient advocate for Yale-New Haven Hospital, co-chair of the Smilow Cancer Hospital Patient-Family Advisory Council, and a member of the Yale melanoma patients support group. He has also been treated at, and served as patient advocate for, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, Maryland.



For 30 years, medical doctors and scientists kept telling us that cigarettes cause cancer before they were finally banned for youths. For at least the past 10 years, doctors and scientists have been warning us that tanning beds cause skin cancer.

It's time for Connecticut to follow the path of California, Brazil, Germany, Austria and the United Kingdom by passing Senate Bill 54 to ban indoor tanning by kids under age 18. Last year, New York and Vermont also banned tanning for children.

We're not talking about putting the tanning salons out of business. Kids do not have the mature minds to make informed decisions about the substantial cancer risk of tanning beds. The business plan of the tanning industry is to get kids hooked on tanning at a young age – much the same way cigarette manufacturers targeted youths in their marketing before it was finally outlawed.

The same ultraviolet light (UV) used in tanning beds caused my melanoma. As my hair receded, UV rays from the sun hit my scalp and corrupted the DNA in melanin cells of my skin. Five years ago, Yale surgeons removed a large portion of my left scalp, but the cancer got into my lymph system, lodging in my neck, then into the bloodstream and into my right lung. The mortality rate for patients in my situation is 95% within five years.

Here's why the bill is so urgent: indoor tanning dramatically elevates melanoma risk and melanoma does not respond to any chemotherapy. It's one of the top six cancers that stubbornly resists treatment and has a high mortality rate – the others being lung, brain, liver, pancreatic, and esophageal. The only FDA-approved melanoma treatments harness the immune system, but their cure rates are less than 10%.

The tanning industry tries to use pseudoscience to say its equipment produces a "safe"
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tan, just as the cigarette industry for years tried to sell “safe” cigarettes. There is no such thing as a “safe tan.” Your skin is the result of hundreds of thousands of years of evolution. Connecticut’s population includes high numbers of European ancestry, whose fair skins are at the greatest risk for skin cancer precipitated by UV light.

Indoor UV tanning functions as a *radiation multiplier*, because those persons still go outdoors and receive all the sun’s UV like the rest of us.

Connecticut legislators must do the right thing and restrict tanning for minors. The current state laws requiring parental consent are worthless and totally unenforceable.

Here are the scientific journals laying out the case for tanning bans for youths:

- Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology: *Adverse Effects of Ultraviolet Radiation from the Use of Indoor Tanning Equipment: Time to Ban the Tan*, November 2010
- British medical journal The Lancet, *A Review of Human Carcinogens, Part D: Radiation*, “The risk of cutaneous melanoma is increased by 75% when use of tanning devices starts before 30 years of age.” August 2009.
- Journal of Clinical Oncology, *Use of Tanning Beds and Incidence of Skin Cancer*, March 2012. “We detected robust association between tanning bed use and skin cancer risk. ...These findings provide evidence to support warning the public...and enacting state and federal legislation to ban tanning bed use for those under age 18.”
- American Journal of Public Health, *Adolescents’ Use of Indoor Tanning: A Large-Scale Evaluation of Psychosocial, Environmental, and Policy-Level Correlates*, March 2011. “The high rate of indoor tanning by older adolescent girls suggests that better laws are needed, preferably in the form of bans for those younger than 18 years...”.
- International Agency for Research on Cancer, *The Association of Use of Sunbeds With Cutaneous Malignant Melanoma and Other Skin Cancers: A Systematic Review*. “Based on 19 informative studies, ever-use of sunbeds was positively associated with melanoma.... First exposure to sunbeds before 35 years of age significantly increased the risk of melanoma....”. March 2006.
- U.S. Federal Trade Commission, *Indoor Tanning Association Settles FTC Charges That It Deceived Consumers About Skin Cancer Risks from Tanning*. “The messages promoted by the indoor tanning industry fly in the face of scientific evidence.” January 2010.