



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 11, 2015

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House Bill 6285 - An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information regarding House Bill #6285, which will prohibit any person from smoking in a motor vehicle when there is a child six years of age or younger or weighing less than 60 pounds. However, it is important to note that youth of all ages should be protected from the effects of second- and third-hand smoke.

In Connecticut, 15.4% of students who are non-tobacco users rode in a vehicle when someone was smoking a tobacco product within seven days of taking the 2013 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey. Also, 17.0% of Connecticut students reported that smoking is always or sometimes allowed in the vehicles they or their family members who live with them own or lease.¹

When a person smokes in a car the other passengers breathe in secondhand smoke (SHS), which is a mixture of gases and particles. No amount of secondhand smoke is safe, as determined by the United States Surgeon General, and breathing secondhand smoke negatively impacts health.² A 2006 study by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health found "alarming" levels of secondhand smoke were generated in just five minutes in vehicles under various driving, ventilation, and smoking conditions³, and another study in 2009 suggests smoking just a single cigarette in a car generated particle exposure limits exceeding Environmental Protection Agency limits, even with a half-open window⁴

Secondhand smoke has been classified as a Group A carcinogen, and children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more severe asthma. Smoking by parents causes respiratory symptoms and slows lung growth in their children.²

The residue of tobacco smoke that settles into the vehicle, clinging to the car's upholstery and carpet long after the cigarette has been extinguished, is called thirdhand smoke, and exposure to these toxins has many of the same health effects as secondhand smoke. This particulate matter contaminates the environment with poisonous substances and contains toxic metals, cancer-causing chemicals and poisonous gases.⁵

While the Department is supportive of measures to reduce exposure to second hand smoke, it is unclear if the bill will have fiscal or administrative implications that may impact law enforcement or other state agencies. Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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