

Testimony Regarding HB6285, An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles

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Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is Ruth Canovi. I am the Manager of Public Policy for the American Lung Association in Connecticut, a not-for-profit voluntary health organization dedicated to saving lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. I am writing in regard to House Bill 6285, An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles to protect children from secondhand smoke.

Secondhand smoke is a mixture of the smoke given off by the burning end of a cigarette, pipe or cigar and the smoke exhaled from the lungs of smokers. This mixture contains thousands of chemical compounds, more than fifty of which are known to cause cancer in humans or animals, and many of which are strong irritants, including formaldehyde, cyanide, carbon monoxide, ammonia and nicotine. There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. According to the Surgeon General the only way to fully protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke is to eliminate smoking indoors.

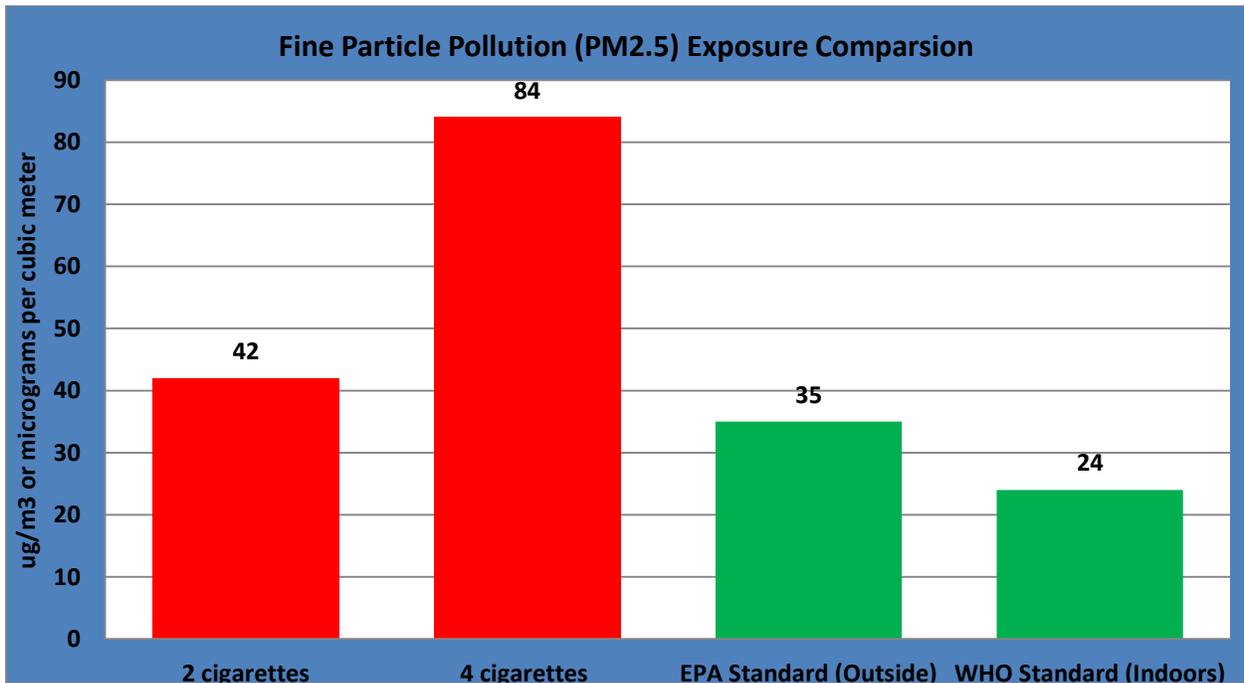
The level of smoke in a vehicle with someone smoking can easily and quickly reach dangerous levels even with the windows partially opened. In 2006, a Harvard School of Public Health study found that within just 5 minutes, “alarming” levels of secondhand smoke were generated, which is particularly dangerous to youth.ⁱ Children whose parents smoke get sick more often, are at risk for more pneumonia and bronchitis and do not see the same lung growth as children who are not exposed. Children exposed to secondhand smoke can also have asthma attacks, ear infections, wheezing and coughing.

This legislation is important as it protects youth who don’t have a choice in what adults do while in the car with them. An infant or toddler cannot even ask the adult to stop smoking and many youth who do have the verbal ability to do so, would still have a tough time asking their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles or other adults not to smoke in their presence. We understand that linking this legislation to child safety seat laws can make enforcement easier, but we ask you to consider protecting all youth under age 18 with this law. Lung development is a long process which is far from over at age 6. There is evidence that lungs continue to grow into adulthood.

We do know that a number of other countries, states and territories are adopting various versions of this policy to help protect youth from secondhand smoke. Arkansas, Louisiana, California, Maine, Oregon, Vermont and Puerto Rico have all prohibited smoking in motor vehicles with children on some level and it looks like these policies are working. In Maine, they have seen significantly higher smokefree car and home rules after the passage of Maine’s

smokefree law.ⁱⁱ In Canada, smoking bans in cars have reduced children's exposure to secondhand smoke by 33%.ⁱⁱⁱ

We do not make the recommendation to prohibit smoking in motor vehicles lightly. We recognize that there is some pushback from people about their freedom to do what they like in their own vehicles. This isn't about limiting an adult's ability to smoke while in their cars by themselves; it is about protecting the freedom of children to breathe healthy air and develop healthy lungs into adulthood. The science behind the impact secondhand smoke has on children in such an enclosed space is clear. Smoking in cars raises levels of fine particulates (pm2.5) to over three times the indoor air quality limit set by the World Health Organization.^{iv} The following chart helps to show levels of fine particulate pollution, which we know has a negative impact on lungs and ability to breathe, and the standards for healthy levels of particulate matter in the air established by the EPA and WHO.



We have the opportunity to make a real difference for children who don't always have the opportunity to advocate for themselves. This piece of legislation has been up for review many times in the past few years. Thank to you Representative Genga for your passion and persistence to see this through. We do hope you will consider broadening the reach and protecting all youth under this piece of legislation.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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ⁱ Rees V and Connolly G. *Measuring Air Quality to Protect Children from Secondhand Smoke in Cars*, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, November 2006.

ⁱⁱ Murphy-Hoefer R, Madden P, Maines D, Coles C. Prevalence of Smoke-Free Car and Home Rules in Maine Before and After Passage of Smoke-Free Vehicle Law, 2007-2010. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2014; 11:130132. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.130132>

ⁱⁱⁱ Nguyen, Hai V., Do Smoke-Free Car Laws Work? Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment, 11th Annual Canadian Health Economists' Study Meeting, University of Alberta, June 6th-7th, 2012.

^{iv} Semple, Sean, Apsley, Andrew et al, *Secondhand smoke in cars: assessing children's potential exposure during typical journey conditions*. Tobacco Control, published online 4 January 2012.