AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION®
Fighting for Air

**Testimony of the American Lung Association in Connecticut in Favor of HB5941, An Act Banning Smoking on Platforms at Rail Stations**

February 23, 2015
Transportation Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 2300
Hartford, CT 06106

Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Transportation Committee:

My name is Ruth Canovi and I serve as the Manager of Public Policy for the American Lung Association in Connecticut. The American Lung Association is a not-for-profit public health association dedicated to saving lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease.

The American Lung Association in Connecticut supports this legislation which removes public exposure to secondhand smoke on rail platforms. If enacted into law, this legislation could mean the difference between having an asthma attack or not for those individuals forced to be in close contact with secondhand smoke while simply waiting to board a train. Tobacco smoke is a known asthma trigger.

The states of New Jersey and New York have enacted smokefree laws which prohibit smoking on train platforms including stations which service Metro-North trains which then travel to and from Connecticut. For people traveling to and from these states, they only have protection from secondhand smoke on half of their voyage.

We know that secondhand tobacco smoke kills; it is responsible for 54,000 deaths each year in the United States. In 2006, the United States Surgeon General released a report declaring there is "no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health."[i] Additionally, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) classifies secondhand smoke as a "Group A" (known) carcinogen. This category is reserved for the most dangerous cancer-causing chemicals and includes such toxins as benzene and asbestos. Nationwide, secondhand smoke is responsible for 3,000 lung cancer deaths per year in nonsmokers. Anyone exposed to secondhand smoke during every day activities faces a much higher lifetime risk of lung cancer. Though the tobacco industry has worked hard to discredit the EPA's classification of secondhand smoke as a carcinogen, the fact is dozens of scientific studies found a causal relationship of cancer from secondhand tobacco smoke. "It is unprecedented for such a consistency of results to be seen in epidemiology studies of cancer from environmental levels of a pollutant."[ii]

Secondhand smoke has also been scientifically linked to contributing to and causing dozens of diseases and illnesses including asthma, heart disease, respiratory tract infections and ear

infections. Secondhand smoke worsens asthma conditions and has been linked to being a significant cause of early childhood asthma.

Because New York and New Jersey have already adopted this policy, we can look to their successes as models for Connecticut. Like so many smokefree policies, it really has proven to be a policy requiring little enforcement outside of signage and self policing. My colleagues in New York tell me that the implementation of this policy went very smoothly and rarely do they ever see anyone smoking on rail platforms.

Prohibiting smoking on platforms at rail stations could make a real difference for the health of residents in Connecticut who rely on trains for transportation needs. Thank you for your consideration of this proposed legislation. The American Lung Association in Connecticut strongly supports this bill and urges the Committee to pass it.

Thank you,

Ruth Canovi, MPH
Manager, Public Policy
American Lung Association in Connecticut

---

[i] See http:www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/secondhandsmoke/

[ii] Setting the Record Straigh: ETS is a Preventable Health Risk, June 2001.
http:ww.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/strsfs.html#theepidemiologystudies