

March 2, 2016

CT General Assembly  
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000  
Hartford, CT 06106

### Testimony in Support of HB5453 An Act Concerning Smoking in Vehicles

Dear 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 CT. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss important tobacco prevention policies in Connecticut, specifically HB5453, An Act Concerning Smoking in Vehicles, to protect children from secondhand smoke while riding in a motor vehicle. I had the privilege of sitting on Speaker Sharkey's Taskforce on this issue. I thank the Speaker for convening the taskforce and the co-chairs Representative Genga and Representative Kokoruda for their leadership as they brought us through the process of examining the issue of reducing secondhand smoke exposure for Connecticut's children. The American Lung Association supports HB5453, An Act Concerning Smoking in Vehicles.

As part of the oldest voluntary health organization in America, our mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. While we have come a long way, we still have a lot of work to do as tobacco remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Connecticut. CT loses 4900 residents to tobacco related diseases annually. Tobacco costs the state \$2B in health care expenses.<sup>1</sup> Too many people think that tobacco is a thing of the past. The industry is ever changing and Connecticut must do more to address this very real public health and fiscal problem.

We are not just concerned about the people still using tobacco products. We have worked hard to protect adults in the workforce from the dangers of secondhand smoke. The fact is that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke and we must do more to protect young kids and those excluded from the protections of our Clean Indoor Air Laws from the impact of secondhand smoke exposure. Secondhand smoke contains hundreds of chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic including formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, cyanide, carbon monoxide, ammonia and nicotine. Secondhand smoke causes more than 41,000 deaths annually. It can cause or make worse a wide range of damaging health effects including heart disease, stroke, lung cancer, respiratory infections and asthma.<sup>2</sup>

As is often the case when considering new legislation related to tobacco, this proposal has generated controversy. We support the recommendations put forth by the taskforce to address some of the enforcement concerns such as the inclusion of language clarifying that a law enforcement officer

may not search or inspect a vehicle, its contents the driver or passenger solely because of a violation of this ban. We also welcome the opportunity to further discuss concerns about enforcement of this law. We do not make this recommendation to limit smoking in vehicles lightly. This policy isn't about prohibiting 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. To that point, there are a number of things that we are told to do/ or not do while behind the wheel of a car to protect the safety and health of drivers and passengers.

The science behind the impact secondhand smoke has on children in such an enclosed space is clear. Levels of air pollution in a car, even if windows are open, get incredibly high incredibly fast:

- From the CT Department of Public Health's website on this issue, "Studies have found that concentration of secondhand smoke is greater in vehicles than in any other environment including a smoker's home and smoke-filled bars." It goes on to highlight that Concentrations of secondhand smoke in a car with no ventilation has been shown to be 27 times greater than in a smoker's home.<sup>3</sup>
- Smoking in cars raises levels of fine particulates (pm 2.5) to over three times the indoor air quality limit set by the World Health Organization.<sup>4</sup>
- "One smoker emits fifty times more fine particles into a car than those emitted per mile by a car's tailpipe."<sup>5</sup>
- A 2006 study by researchers at 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 conditions.<sup>6</sup>

In 2013, 20.5% of middle and high school students were in a vehicle with someone who was smoking in the prior seven days to the survey. We do not have data for children younger than middle school. For adults, the most recent data we have is from 2010, but in that case only 7.1% of nonsmoking adults were in a vehicle with someone who was smoking.<sup>7</sup>

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, California, Louisiana, Maine, Oregon, Vermont and Puerto Rico have all limited smoking in motor vehicles with children on some level and they are seeing positive results. In Maine, they have seen significantly higher smokefree car and home rules after the passage of Maine's law limiting smoking in cars with minors.<sup>8</sup> In Canada, smoking bans in cars have reduced children's exposure to secondhand smoke by 33%.<sup>9</sup>

Again, this issue brings to light the fact that Connecticut still has a number of areas for improvement in our work to fight the fatal impact tobacco has on our state. Every year the American Lung Association releases our State of Tobacco Control Report (see attached). It grades every state in the nation on four policy areas of importance shown to reduce tobacco use. Every year we see that

Connecticut has one of the highest cigarette taxes yet we have historically low levels of tobacco control program funding. In fact we earn a B for our Tobacco Tax grade (our lower levels of taxation for other tobacco products prevents us from getting an A), yet every year we earn an F for Tobacco Prevention and Control Program Funding. In fact, in all of the years since the beginning of the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund, we have spent \$29.5M on tobacco control programs. This cumulative spending is less than what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend we spend annually (\$32M). In our 2016 State of Tobacco Control Report, CT also earned a C for our smokefree air laws. There are a number of loopholes in our laws we could close to bring us closer to our neighbors' more modern clean indoor air laws. As you look to address our state's efforts to reduce the impact of secondhand smoke on youth, we hope you will take the opportunity to take a broad look at the many ways we can improve our work and our health and encourage you to support HB5453 as part of a larger focus on improving Connecticut's public and fiscal health.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Ruth Canovi, MPH

Manager, Public Policy, American Lung Association of the Northeast

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<sup>1</sup> State of Tobacco Control 2016. American Lung Association. <http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/tobacco/reports-resources/sotc/?referrer=http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/tobacco/reports-resources/sotc/>

<sup>2</sup> Health Effects of Secondhand Smoke. The American Lung Association. <http://www.lung.org/stop-smoking/smoking-facts/health-effects-of-secondhand-smoke.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Tobacco Smoke in Cars. Department of Public Health. Connecticut. <http://www.ct.gov/dph/cwp/view.asp?a=3137&Q=489990&PM=1> Accessed on 3/1/2016.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Smokefree Cars. Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights. <http://www.no-smoke.org/learnmore.php?id=616>

<sup>6</sup> Rees V and Connolly G. *Measuring Air Quality to Protect Children from Secondhand Smoke in Cars*, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, November 2006.

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/tobacco/pdf/shs\\_factsheet\\_2014\\_2.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/hems/tobacco/pdf/shs_factsheet_2014_2.pdf) "Secondhand Smoke Exposure – Connecticut" Tobacco Use Prevention and Control Program – September 2014. CT Department of Public Health

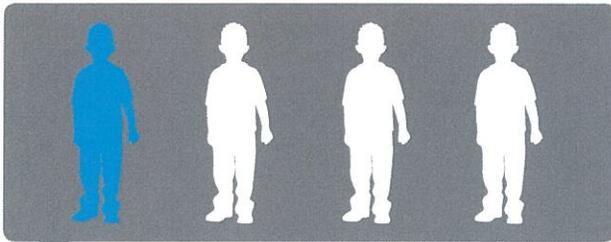
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<sup>8</sup> Murphy-Hoefer R, Madden P, Maines D, Coles C. Prevalence of Smoke-Free Car and Home Rules in Maine Before and After Passage of Smoke-Free Vehicle Law, 2007-2010. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2014; 11:130132.<http://dx.doi.org/10.5888/pcd11.130132>

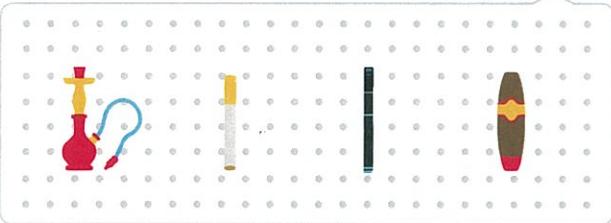
<sup>9</sup> Nguyen, Hai V., Do Smoke-Free Car Laws Work? Evidence from a Quasi-Experiment, 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Health Economists' Study Meeting, University of Alberta, June 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 2012.



	Tobacco Prevention & Control Program Funding	Tobacco Taxes	Smokefree Air	Access to Cessation Services
<b>CT</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>



**ONE IN FOUR KIDS IN THE U.S. USES TOBACCO PRODUCTS.**



**CONNECTICUT STATE FACTS**

Healthcare Costs Due to Smoking:	\$2,038,803,314
Adult Smoking Rate:	15.4%
Adult Tobacco Use Rate:	16.5%
High School Smoking Rate:	13.5%
Middle School Smoking Rate:	2.9%
Smoking Attributable Deaths:	4,900

To get involved with your American Lung Association, please contact:  
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**State Goals 2016**

1. Restore and sustain funding for tobacco prevention and cessation programs to at least \$6 million per year;
2. Close loopholes in the state's clean indoor air act to protect all workers from secondhand smoke;
3. Achieve tax parity between cigarettes and other tobacco products.

**Nationwide Goals 2016**

1. Reduce rates of smoking and other tobacco use to less than 10 percent for all communities by 2024;
2. Protect all Americans from secondhand smoke by 2019; and
3. Ultimately eliminate the death and disease caused by tobacco use.