



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Health Committee

March 2, 2016

Commissioner Raul Pino, MD, MPH

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House Bill 5453 - An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles

The Department of Public Health (DPH) provides the following information on House Bill #5453 and the negative effects of tobacco smoke exposure.

17.4% of Connecticut middle and high school students report that they rode in a vehicle with someone who was smoking a tobacco product within seven days of taking the 2015 Connecticut Youth Tobacco Survey. Nearly half of smoking parents surveyed reported smoking while their children were in the car.¹

Secondhand smoke has been classified as a Group A carcinogen (known human) by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that is causally associated with health problems such as lung cancer, cardiovascular disease and heart disease.² There are more than 7,000 chemicals in tobacco smoke: hundreds of them are toxic and about 70 are known to cause cancer.³

Secondhand smoke from electronic nicotine delivery systems has also been shown to have carcinogens and should be included in this restriction.

Babies and children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and severe asthma.³ Smoking by parents causes respiratory symptoms and slows lung growth in their children.¹

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 conditions, and also found a "significant increase" in levels of carbon monoxide, a poisonous gas.⁴

The residue of tobacco smoke that settles into the vehicle, clinging to the car's upholstery and carpet long after the combustible product has been extinguished is called thirdhand smoke, and exposure to these toxins has many of the same health effects as secondhand smoke.

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As determined by the United States Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.³ Smoke-free motor vehicle policies would help reduce exposure to both second- and third-hand smoke by anyone driving or riding in a motor vehicle and would aid in protecting them from its harmful health effects.¹

The Department of Public Health supports all measures to protect people from exposure to tobacco smoke. Thank you for your consideration of the Department's views on this bill.

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 3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2010.
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