

March 2, 2016

CT General Assembly, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony in Support of HB 5453, An Act Concern Smoking in Motor Vehicles

Distinguished Chairpersons and Members of the Public Health Committee:

My name is David Hill. I am the Director of Clinical Research at Waterbury Pulmonary Associates, an Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at both Yale University School of Medicine and Quinnipiac University, and a long time volunteer for the American Lung Association. I am deeply committed to the American Lung Association's mission which is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Every day I see the negative impact secondhand smoke has on our youth in Connecticut, which is why I write to you regarding House Bill 5453, An Act Concerning Smoking in Motor Vehicles.

Secondhand smoke is a carcinogen. The Surgeon General has states that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.¹ Children have higher oxygen requirements and breathe at a faster rate than adults which leads to increased damage from secondhand smoke. Those exposed to secondhand smoke have higher risks of asthma, ear infections, bronchitis, pneumonia, depression and ADHD. Being in a car where an adult smokes 2 cigarettes is similar to being in a smoke filled bar, something our state legislature has seen fit to ban in order to protect fully grown adult lungs. Children in cars are often not in a position to ask adults not to smoke. It is up to our state to help protect these children who cannot advocate for themselves.

In previous years, this legislation has been proposed to protect only youth age 6 and younger. I commend the committee for broadening the scope of those protected to include all minors. Secondhand smoke exposure is worse for younger kids, but not safe for children or frankly for anyone else. In an article published in the March 2015 New England Journal of Medicine, a study in California highlighted how lung development in children improved after air pollution was controlled. The study affirmed that lungs are developing rapidly between the ages of 11 to 15 and that lung function continues to develop in girls at least until their late teens and boys until their 20s.²

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2006.

² W. James Gauderman, Ph.D., Robert Urman, M.S., Edward Avol, M.S., Kiros Berhane, Ph.D., Rob McConnell, M.D., Edward Rappaport, M.S., Roger Chang, Ph.D., Fred Lurmann, M.S., and Frank Gilliland, M.D., Ph.D.

Thank you for your passion, patience and persistence in your work to further protect children from the dangers of environmental tobacco smoke. This pollutant is harmful to children's developing lungs and is a known carcinogen. We've done the right thing and passed protective laws for adults from secondhand smoke. We now have an obligation to protect our youth from high levels of this pollutant in the close quarters of a car.

I thank you for your time and consideration. As you consider how to proceed on this issue, I ask you to take a deep breath and recognize what a privilege that simple act is. Please protect our future generation's ability to breathe deeply as well.

Thank you.

David G. Hill, MD
Middlebury, CT