

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF RICHARD FREEMAN, MD, F.A.C.P.
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PROVIDED TO THE PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Tuesday, March 20, 2018

SB 164, An Act Raising The Legal Age To Purchase Tobacco To Twenty-One

HB 5289, An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Expanding The Clean Indoor Air Act

I appreciate the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Western CT Health Network (**WCHN**) concerning **SB 164, An Act Raising The Legal Age To Purchase Tobacco To Twenty-One**, and **HB 5289, An Act Concerning The Department Of Public Health's Recommendations Regarding Expanding The Clean Indoor Air Act**. **WCHN** supports passage of these important bills.

According to the [Center for Disease Control](#):

- Smoking leads to disease and disability and harms nearly every organ of the body.
- Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death.
- Smoking costs the United States billions of dollars each year.
- Thousands of young people across the United States start smoking cigarettes every day.

According to the CT Department of Public Health 2016 report on [Youth and Tobacco Use in CT](#):

- Approximately 56,000 children alive in Connecticut today will ultimately die prematurely from smoking-related disease.
- Each year in CT, about 2,100 under 18 will become new daily smokers.

SB 164 would raise the legal age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21. If passed into law, Connecticut would join other states and cities that have increased the age to purchase tobacco. Currently, an individual must be 21 to purchase tobacco in California, Hawaii, Maine, New Jersey, Oregon, New York City, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Portland (Maine), Albany (New York), and the two Kansas Cities (Missouri and Kansas).

HB 5289 would expand Connecticut's Clean Indoor Air Act by adding to the number workplaces and locations required to be smoke-free. Additionally, HB 5289 would eliminate several exemptions to the Clean Indoor Air Act passed in 2003.

Through medical education and clinical experience, and our work with area schools, public health and substance use agencies, we know that the best way to reduce harm caused by smoking is to simply abstain from smoking. It is the very reason WCHN initiated smoke-free campuses many years ago in addition to implementing a very successful smoking cessation program to employees and our community.

Let's address the leading cause of preventable death together. **Western CT Health Network** urges the committee to pass the Department of Public Health's recommendations to expand the Clean Indoor Air Act and to increase the legal age to purchase tobacco to 21 to protect and enhance the health and well-being of Connecticut's residents and visitors.

I appreciate your consideration of our position and would be happy to provide additional information. You may contact me at 203-739-7000 or at Richard.Freeman@wchn.org.