

**TESTIMONY  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
Tuesday, March 20, 2018**

Yale New Haven Health System (YNHHS), Connecticut's leading health care provider, is pleased to submit testimony in support of **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.**

Yale New Haven Health System, through Bridgeport, Greenwich, Lawrence & Memorial, Westerly and Yale-New Haven Hospitals, and their affiliated organizations, including the North East Medical Group, strives to provide access to high-quality, patient-centered care in collaboration with others who share our values. We offer our patients a range of healthcare services, from primary care to the most complex care available anywhere in the world. Despite low government reimbursements, we provide care to all who seek our services regardless of their ability to pay. We are the State's largest provider of services to those insured by the Medicaid program, and we are not reimbursed at cost for the services we provide.

SB 164 would raise the legal age to buy tobacco from 18 to 21. We know that the best way to reduce health-associated harm caused by smoking is to abstain from smoking or, at a minimum, delay the start of smoking. YNHHS has worked closely with local government to enact other policies to curb tobacco use. Yale New Haven Hospital was the first healthcare organization in Connecticut to ban tobacco use in public spaces around its medical campus, including sidewalks, as a result of municipal legislation. Further, YNHHS is a key partner in the Tobacco Free Coalition, a group of organizations that came together around legislation banning tobacco and e-cigarettes from public school grounds and parks, with an effort to better inform tobacco users of cessation resources and the health benefits of a tobacco free lifestyle.

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 of workplaces and locations required to be smoke-free. Additionally, HB 5289 would eliminate several exemptions to the Clean Indoor Air Act passed in 2003. YNHHS provides free tobacco cessation assistance to employees seeking to quit, and incentivizes tobacco abstinence via a healthcare premium discount for non-users.

Connecticut first implemented its Clean Indoor Air Act in 2003. The passage of the 2003 Clean Indoor Air Act has helped to educate the public on the dangers of smoking-and the associated negative impact of secondhand smoke.

For these reasons, Yale New Haven Health System 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.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.