



**TESTIMONY OF  
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION  
SUBMITTED 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**

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) appreciates this opportunity to submit testimony 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**. CHA supports these important bills.

Before commenting on the bills, it's important to point out that Connecticut hospitals provide high quality care for everyone, regardless of their ability to pay. Connecticut hospitals are dynamic, complex organizations that are continually working to find innovative ways to better serve patients and communities and build a healthier Connecticut. By investing in the future of Connecticut's hospitals, we will strengthen our healthcare system and our economy, put communities to work, and deliver affordable care that Connecticut families deserve.

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 altogether or, at a minimum, delay the start in which you begin to smoke. Recent data show that more than 10 percent of Connecticut high school students smoke, and 1,300 Connecticut children under the age of 18 become new daily smokers each year.<sup>1</sup>National data show that about 95 percent of adult smokers began smoking before they turned 21, and approximately 80 percent of adult smokers first tried smoking before the age of 18.<sup>2</sup>

Tobacco use is a pediatric epidemic as most tobacco use starts in the high school years.<sup>2</sup> Eighty percent of youth smokers will become adult smokers and one-half of adult smokers will die prematurely from tobacco-related diseases.<sup>2</sup>

On a daily basis, caregivers in Connecticut hospitals see firsthand the impact of smoking-related disease and illness and, because of this, we wholeheartedly endorse common sense public policy initiatives that reduce or delay the start of smoking by youths. If SB 164 is 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, (PA 03-45), by increasing the number of workplaces and locations required to be smoke-free including, but not limited to: any retail establishment; on any school property, regardless of whether school is in session or student activities are being conducted, any dormitory; correctional facilities; psychiatric facilities, and in hotels or motels.

HB 5289 would also eliminate the language in the original Clean Indoor Air Act that exempts employers with less than five employees from designating a smoking area, eliminate the language that permits smoking rooms in places of employment, and establish language to allow a business owner to prohibit smoking on the entire property on which the business is located. The bill would also include prohibitions on the use of electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and vapor products in the workplace.

The Clean Indoor Air Act has helped to educate the public's understanding on the dangers of smoking and the associated negative impact of secondhand smoke. We urge the Committee to pass the Department of Public Health's recommendations to expand the Clean Indoor Air Act to protect and enhance the health and well-being of Connecticut's residents and visitors.

Thank you for your consideration of our position. For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 294-7310.

<sup>1</sup> The Toll of Tobacco in Connecticut. Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. Last updated 11/17/17. Accessed at <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/connecticut-on-1/12/18>.

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2014. ICPSR36361-v1. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-03-22. <http://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36361.v1>; see also Institute of Medicine, *Public Health Implications of Raising the Minimum Age of Legal Access to Tobacco Products*, Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2015, <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2015/TobaccoMinimumAgeReport.aspx>