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**PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE**  
**LABOR AND PUBLIC EMPLOYEES COMMITTEE**  
**JOINT INFORMATIONAL HEARING**

**APRIL 26, 2021**

**RE: Extending Prohibition of Smoking Including the Use of Electronic Cigarette/Vaping Products Use in Connecticut Casinos.**

The American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), the nonprofit, non-partisan advocacy affiliate of the American Cancer Society, advocates for public policies that reduce death and suffering from cancer. ACS CAN supports prohibiting smoking, including the use of electronic cigarettes, throughout Connecticut's casino facilities ACS CAN supports everyone's right to breathe clean smoke-free air and no one should have to choose between their health and a paycheck.

Tobacco users are not the only ones who breathe the deadly smoke—all the people around them are forced to inhale it too. Secondhand smoke causes nearly 42,000 deaths, including up to 7,300 lung cancer deaths among nonsmoking adults each year in the United States.<sup>i,ii</sup> Exposure to secondhand smoke causes many of the same tobacco-related diseases as active smoking, including heart disease, stroke, and cancer.<sup>iii</sup> In addition, secondhand smoke increases the risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems, and more severe asthma.<sup>iv</sup> Multiple Surgeon General's reports have confirmed that the scientific evidence indicates there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.<sup>v,vi</sup>

Secondhand smoke (SHS) is an occupational hazard for many casino workers—from dealers to restaurants, bars, shops and security. Job-related exposure to SHS is a significant, but entirely preventable, cause of premature death among U.S. workers.<sup>vii viii ix</sup> Recognizing this, 27 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and over 1,131 localities across the country have implemented laws that require 100% smoke-free workplaces, including restaurants and bars.<sup>x</sup> Eighteen of these states, as well as Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, also include gaming facilities in their comprehensive smoke-free laws. It's time for Connecticut to join this list.

**Secondhand Smoke: Risking Workers' Health**

Casino workers are at higher risk for SHS-related illness than other workers: The National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH) and the US Surgeon General found that occupational exposure to SHS increases workers' risk of lung cancer and other diseases.<sup>xi xii xiii</sup> Nicotine concentrations in the air in casinos were found to be 2.4-18.5 times higher than in offices or residences, and 1.5-11.7 times higher than in restaurants.<sup>xiv</sup> Another study found that smoke particles were approximately 12 times greater inside casinos than outside.<sup>xv</sup> A study examining casino dealers' occupational exposure to SHS in three casinos found that they were exposed to nicotine and a number of toxins—including carcinogens<sup>xvi</sup> benzene, naphthalene, formaldehyde, and acetaldehyde.<sup>xvii</sup> Patrons were also found to have significantly

elevated levels of a tobacco-specific lung carcinogen after a four-hour visit to a casino that allowed smoking.<sup>xviii</sup>

SHS and unsafe levels of smoke-related pollutants have been found throughout the entire casino gaming area, suggesting that casino patrons as well as other casino employees (e.g. servers, cashiers, security personnel) may incur the same level of SHS exposure as dealers and supervisors.<sup>xix</sup> A study examining levels of SHS in 21 Nevada casinos with non-smoking restaurants adjacent to gaming areas where smoking was allowed found that the non-smoking areas still had an average of 60 percent of the amount of SHS as the areas where smoking was allowed.<sup>xx</sup> A study on the impact of SHS in Pennsylvania casinos found that exposure causes five times as many premature deaths as Pennsylvania mining disasters.<sup>xxi</sup>

Much of the workforce can go to work every day not having to wonder about breathing clean air. However, here in Connecticut, casino workers remain unprotected from secondhand smoke. Many hospitality jobs like those in casino facilities offer flexible hours and schedules that work better for people. Finding another job in Connecticut that fits an employee's current schedule or situation may not be an option.

### **Improving Workers' Health**

Smoke-free casino laws reduce exposure to SHS and improve the health of casino workers and patrons: NIOSH and the Surgeon General recommend that ALL workers be protected from involuntary exposure to SHS.<sup>xxii xxiii</sup> Research has shown that smoke-free policies reduce workers' long-term risk of lung cancer and cardiovascular disease.<sup>xxiv xxv xxvi xxvii xxviii xxix</sup> Comprehensive smoke-free policies also reduce the risk of hospitalizations and death from heart, stroke, and lung diseases.<sup>xxx</sup> More comprehensive smoke-free laws had an even greater impact on risk of disease and death. A study comparing SHS particulate levels in 66 U.S. casinos where smoking is allowed with three non-smoking casinos found that the smoke-free casinos had, on average, 94 percent lower levels of SHS particulate.<sup>xxxi</sup> In about half of the smoking casinos, the SHS levels exceeded a level known to increase cardiovascular risk in nonsmokers after less than 2 hours of exposure, posing acute health risks for patrons and workers. In casinos with a non-smoking section, the ventilation and separation systems were unable to remove the majority of the SHS that a comprehensive smoke-free law removed.<sup>xxxii</sup> Another recent study found a 19.1 percent decrease in ambulance calls originating from Colorado casinos as a result of the extension of smoke-free laws to casinos.<sup>xxxiii</sup>

### **Improving the Bottom Line**

Smoke-free casino laws are popular and good for business. There is strong public support for making casinos smoke-free. Three years after the implementation of Iowa's smoke-free law, 63percent of voters supported expanding the smoke-free law to casinos.<sup>xxxiv</sup> More than 70 percent of New Jersey voters supported extending the statewide Smoke-Free Air Act to cover casino gaming floors in 2007. In Southern California, more than 85 percent of gaming customers surveyed in Indian casinos stated that they would prefer a smoke free environment.<sup>xxxv</sup> When smoking is allowed in the workplace, business owners increase their costs of doing business. Employers pay increased health, life, and fire insurance premiums, make higher workers' compensation payments, incur higher worker absenteeism, and settle for lower worker productivity.<sup>xxxvi xxxvii xxxviii xxxix xl xli xlii xliii</sup> Employees who smoke have significantly higher absentee, injury, accident, and disciplinary rates than their nonsmoking colleagues.<sup>xliv xlv xlvi xlvii</sup> Studies on the impact of smoke-free gaming laws in Delaware and Kentucky showed that the laws had no effect on total gaming revenue.<sup>xlviii xlix</sup> A Massachusetts study found that 100 percent smoke-free ordinances did not negatively affect profits from bingo and other gambling sponsored by charitable organizations.<sup>1</sup>

## Secondhand Smoke, Air Quality, and Ventilation

The Surgeon General has concluded that even separating people who smoke from those who do not, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure of nonsmokers to secondhand smoke. The only effective way to fully protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke is to completely eliminate smoking in indoor public spaces.<sup>lix</sup>

Particulate matter, of the size found in cigarette smoke, is easily and deeply inhaled and absorbed into the lungs and can lead to disease and death. Numerous studies over the past two decades have repeatedly shown that smoke-free laws are the only effective way to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke. Despite the fact that ventilation systems cannot remove carcinogens found in secondhand smoke, the tobacco industry and their allies have promoted ventilation as a method to accommodate both smokers and non-smokers. Much of what these systems do is remove the nuisance of the smell caused by cigarette smoke and not the carcinogens present.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) affirmed in 2010, and re-affirmed in 2013, that the only means of effectively eliminating the health risk associated with indoor exposure is to prohibit smoking activity. According to ASHRAE the only way to eliminate the health risks of secondhand smoke exposure is to prohibit the smoking behavior all together. Furthermore, no engineering approaches, including ventilation and air cleaning technologies, can eliminate the health risk of secondhand smoke.<sup>lii</sup>

We urge you to protect all Casino facility workers and the public from the harmful effects of secondhand smoke exposure. No one should have to choose between their livelihood and their health.

Thank you for consideration of our comments.

Bryte Johnson  
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