



TEXAS PUBLIC HEALTH COALITION

Senate Health and Human Services Committee

Senate Bill 355 by Sen. Rodney Ellis

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Texas Medical Association, Texas Public Health Coalition, Texas Pediatric Society, Texas Academy of Family Physicians

Good afternoon. I am Susan Rudd Bailey, president of the Texas Medical Association. I am an allergist in private practice. I am board certified in allergy and immunology, and pediatrics. Today I am here representing the nearly 48,000 physicians of TMA, the Texas Pediatric Society, and the Texas Academy of Family Physicians. I'm also here on behalf of the thousands of public health advocates of the Texas Public Health Coalition, which consists of 23 diverse public health organizations.

And I can say that Texas physicians and the public health organizations that belong to the Texas Public Health Coalition strongly support Senate Bill 355. Together we represent local health officials, health care providers, advocates, and citizens in every county across the state. Passing legislation to prohibit smoking in public places is one of the single most important things the legislature can do right now to make a meaningful, lasting improvement in the health of all Texans — without incurring additional costs to the state and also likely resulting in savings to many state-funded programs.

We've known for decades about the devastating health effects of cigarettes and secondhand smoke. This is something my colleagues and I witness every day and is why I advise my patients that they must quit smoking — not only for their own health but also for the health of their loved ones. For every one of the 24,500 people that tobacco will kill in Texas this year, another 20 will be sick from tobacco-related illnesses.

There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. Anyone who inhales cigarette smoke, whether directly or secondhand, is exposed to thousands of chemicals including many known to cause cancer. By prohibiting smoking in public places, Senate Bill 355 protects innocent Texans from inhaling these hazardous chemicals. Tobacco-smoke pollution causes about 53,000 deaths in the United States every year. The only way to truly prevent exposure is to create smoke-free spaces.

The effects of tobacco-smoke pollution can be divided into *acute* and *chronic* effects. Acute effects such as asthma attacks occur especially in children. Even very short-term exposure to

tobacco smoke has an effect on platelets and coronary arteries that cause heart attacks in adults. Thousands of Texans experience the chronic effects of tobacco smoke pollution, which are atherosclerotic changes of the coronary arteries. These lead to coronary artery disease and the carcinogens that cause cancers. These cancers include the No. 1 cancer killer of men and women — lung cancer.

Ensuring Texas has smoke-free public places is simply good public policy. Already more than 30 states have smoke-free laws protecting workplaces, including restaurants and bars. Public health legislation like Senate Bill 355 provides basic protections for a safe environment, just as other laws provide basic protections for consumers by requiring private business owners to have unchained fire exits, or restaurants owners to keep rats away from food. We make sure buildings meet physical accessibility standards. We make sure schools are free from asbestos, serve healthy lunches, and are located away from adult-oriented business. We also need to make sure Texans with asthma and heart disease, or who are pregnant, are protected from tobacco-smoke pollution.

Senate Bill 355 also guarantees all workers, including those who are pregnant, are protected from toxic exposures to tobacco smoke at their job. This legislation not only removes the toxic effects on nonsmokers but it increases the likelihood that smokers will come to understand that it's time to quit smoking. A report released last week projects that a comprehensive smoke-free workplace policy would induce more than 32,000 Texas workers to stop smoking. Since more than 30,000 children in Texas start smoking each year, this also would send a strong message to our young Texans that smoking is dangerous and is not a socially acceptable activity.

It is time for Texas to join the other states in protecting its citizens with a complete ban on smoking in **all** workplaces. Senate Bill 355 provides this protection. *Simple, easy, effective.* Texas can no longer afford to indulge the smoking habits of some at a huge cost to all Texas taxpayers.

Thank you to Senator Ellis for sponsoring this important legislation. And thank you for allowing me to speak to this very important public health issue.

I'm more than happy to answer any questions that you may have.