



October 17, 2023

Dear Milwaukee Judiciary and Legislative Committee,

My name is Carissa Hoium and I live in Wauwatosa, WI. I work as the Program Leader of the Environmental Health initiative at Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin and am a volunteer with the City of Milwaukee Tobacco-Free Alliance along with the Partnership for a Tobacco-Free Wisconsin.

As part of my role, I lead the Wisconsin Asthma Coalition (WAC) under a subcontract with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services. The WAC works to reduce asthma disparities and the burden of asthma in the state. I see how tobacco is still a problem in Wisconsin and is a threat to lung health. I am writing to ask you to reverse your support of the tobacco bar bills (Assembly Bill 451/Senate Bill 471). Allowing more tobacco bars creates a significant loophole in clean indoor air protections and weakens decades of progress in preventing exposure to secondhand smoke and reducing tobacco use. The clean indoor air law has been good for health and good for business. The clean indoor air law also is broadly popular, with 77.5% of Wisconsinites supporting the current law, 18.3% neither support nor oppose, and only 4.2% oppose the clean indoor air law.<sup>i</sup>

Encouraging cigar smoking in our community sends the wrong message to our youth. An estimated 500,000 U.S. students used cigars in 2022, making cigars the second most popular tobacco product among youth. Young people who start using tobacco products are more likely to become addicted than adults. Normalizing cigar smoking in our community sends the wrong message to young people and provides tobacco companies with the continued opportunity to aggressively market their deadly and addictive products. Exposing our youth to a perceived "acceptable smoking culture" is not the direction our community should be moving.

Tobacco smoke is a primary trigger of asthma attacks. According to the 2020 Wisconsin Asthma Burden Report, more than 500,000 children and adults in our state have asthma. Milwaukee's asthma rate is one and a half times the statewide rate at 15% and Milwaukee County also has the highest asthma Emergency Department visit rate in the state. Approximately 1 in 11 adults in Wisconsin has asthma, and about 1 in 4 adults have missed work due to asthma. Asthma symptoms are responsible for decreased quality of life, sleep disturbances and an inability to carry out one's normal activities. Tobacco prevention and control policies in public spaces are VITAL to protecting the health of Wisconsinites.

Reports from two different Surgeon Generals have found that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.<sup>ii,iii</sup> Ventilation systems cannot remove the carcinogens from secondhand smoke and do not purify the air at rates fast enough to protect people from harmful toxins. The Surgeon General has concluded that even separating people who smoke from people who don't smoke, cleaning the air, and ventilating buildings cannot eliminate exposure to secondhand smoke. The only effective way to fully protect people from exposure to secondhand smoke is to completely eliminate smoking in indoor public spaces. Wisconsin has been a leader in protecting all its citizens from the known,



indisputable hazards of secondhand smoke in the workplace and public places. Our law covering all indoor public places has been in place since 2009, and it's working! The law protects both workers and patrons at all business establishments throughout the state. We want to protect our "A" grade on Smokefree Air on the American Lung Association's State of Tobacco Control Report.

On behalf of the WAC, thank you for reconsidering all of the ramifications of this bill and for opposing it to protect the health of Wisconsinites, especially those living with asthma. The WAC is comprised of more than 180 individuals and organizations working to take control of asthma in Wisconsin. The Coalition is led by Children's Health Alliance of Wisconsin, a statewide voice for children's health. We raise awareness, mobilize leaders, impact public health and implement programs proven to work. Our key initiatives are emergency care, environmental health, food security, injury prevention and death review, medical home, and oral health. Learn more at [www.chawisconsin.org](http://www.chawisconsin.org).

Sincerely,

Carissa Hoium  
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Wauwatosa, WI 53226

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<sup>i</sup> Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Adults. February 2023.

[https://www.cuph.org/uploads/2/5/8/5/25855930/tobacco\\_facts\\_adults\\_2023\\_february\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.cuph.org/uploads/2/5/8/5/25855930/tobacco_facts_adults_2023_february_1_.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General. 2006. Atlanta, GA: HHS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health (OSH).

<sup>iii</sup> HHS. How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: The Biology and Behavioral Basis for Smoking-Attributable Disease – A Report of the Surgeon General. 2010. Atlanta, GA: HHS, CDC, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, OSH.