



**Testimony in Support of H.B. #682
Pennsylvania House of Representatives
Health Committee
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Mr Chairman and Committee Members:

Good morning Mr Chairman and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee today. My name is Deborah Brown and I am the CEO of the American Lung Association and a Pennsylvania resident.

I stand before you today to be the voice for the millions of men, women and children in the Commonwealth that deserve to have to a Comprehensive Clean Indoor Air Law with no exemptions. The American Lung Association support H.B. #682 -- because it creates a glimmer of hope for every Pennsylvanian – especially employees in the casino industry – to have a smoke-free work environment.

In 2008, the American Lung Association supported the intent of the Clean Indoor Air Act but was disappointed that every Pennsylvanian was not afforded the opportunity to work in a smoke free environment, including the more than 17,000 -30,000casino workers.

Pennsylvania's law still leaves many workers in the hospitality industry exposed. Currently, there are 2,500 application based exemptions that allow workers and patrons to be exposed to secondhand smoke.

I want to speak to the "perception" that there is a direct correlation between a loss in revenue and a smokefree casino floor! That is merely an unfounded perception and is NOT a reality.

In recent article, a consortium of casino owners stated that the gaming markets in New York, Maryland and Ohio have been growing and thriving! Ironically, the consortium owners were correct, the casinos in those states are thriving and more importantly in a state that is 100 percent smoke-free. In our neighboring states of New York, Maryland, Ohio, and Delaware, and country wide there are at least 500 state-regulated gambling facilities that are required to be 100% smokefree. While smokefree, these facilities have boasted boosts in revenue and patrons.

- Smokefree Gaming is a Win, Win: According to the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board 2014 report, the state's casinos employ 17,768 -25,000 individuals that should not have to choose between their health and a paycheck.
 - Companies that operate casinos in Pennsylvania also operate in smokefree states and municipalities:

- Philadelphia Harrah's operated by Caesars which now has 18 smokefree casino properties worldwide, including a number they opened as smokefree such as Horseshoe Baltimore, Horseshoe Cleveland, and Horseshoe Cincinnati
 - Live! Casino – co-owned by Cordish Companies which also owns the highly successful smokefree Maryland Live! near Baltimore
 - Hollywood Casino at Penn National Race Course – owned by Penn National gaming, which has smokefree gaming properties in Illinois (3 properties), Maryland, Massachusetts, Ohio (4 properties) and Maine. In Ohio, they even have a tobacco free workforce policy.
 - Presque Isle Downs and Casinos – The developer – MTR Gaming Group - also own/operate Scotio Downs in Columbus, Ohio & Mountaineer Casino, West Virginia which is set to go smokefree July 1st, 2015
 - Rivers Casino and Sugar House – owned and operated by Rush Street Gaming which also owns Rivers Casino Des Plaines one of Illinois' premier casinos, opened smokefree in 2010 as well as a property set to open in New York in 2016.
- Market analysis reported in 2015 that gaming revenues in smokefree Ohio increased by 35.5% and resulted in an 11% decline in Indiana gaming revenue. In other words, being smokefree indoors is not a barrier to successfully competing in a regional market.
 - 82% of U.S. population are nonsmokers, including 4 out of 5 casino visitors.

According to Americans For Non Smokers Rights, Smoke-filled casinos have up to 50 times more cancer causing particles in the air than highways and city streets clogged with diesel trucks in rush hour traffic. In Pennsylvania, a study was conducted for by James Repace before and after the Clean Indoor Air Law was passed.

The study showed that in 2007 the cities of Philadelphia and Scranton implemented clean indoor air ordinances. The ordinances include the majority of workplaces in Philadelphia and Scranton, including restaurants and bars. The cities of Philadelphia and Scranton's indoor air quality were assessed before and after the clean indoor air ordinance went into effect. Hospitality venues in Philadelphia and Scranton were assessed using air

pollution monitors. The venues consisted of restaurants, bars, and a bowling alley. The testing took place between September 2006 and February 2007. At each of the sites, measurements were taken of a pollutant that is known to increase the risk of respiratory disease, cancer, heart disease, and stroke. The pollutant is called Respirable Particle Air Pollution (RSP). RSP is fine particle pollution that can be inhaled and cause damage to lung tissue. Respirable Particle Air Pollution (RSP) can cause aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, heart attack, and premature death. At each of the hospitality venues, several factors were assessed including: Average concentration of pollutants, Smoker density (the percentage of patrons actively smoking), Air exchange rate and the Estimate of secondhand smoke. The studies of the Philadelphia and Scranton hospitality venues before and after the clean indoor air ordinances were implemented indicated an 87% drop in RSP. The study revealed that, before the ordinances, the average prevalence of active smoking (burning cigarettes) was just 4% of observed patrons in these establishments. Despite this low smoking prevalence, all venues were heavily polluted. (This helps show how pervasive cigarette smoke can be, as just a handful of burning cigarettes can make it seem like everyone in the entire establishment is smoking.)

Casino owners are trying to deem a certain level of secondhand smoke as safe, through implementation of "air-handling systems and smoking-mitigation measures." However, the U.S. surgeon general stated there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Ventilation does not solve the problem. Casino workers even in a "well-ventilated" casino have cotinine (metabolized nicotine) levels 300-600% higher than employees in other smoking workplaces during a work shift. Ventilation systems may remove odor but cannot fully remove the serious health risks caused by secondhand smoke exposure.

Ventilation does not work:

A federal report from the [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health \(NIOSH\)](#) shows workers in Las Vegas casinos are exposed to dangerous levels of secondhand smoke at work.

Results from the report indicate dangerous levels of secondhand smoke exposure present at all casinos tested, regardless of ventilation systems. Toxins from secondhand smoke were absorbed into workers' bodies at growing levels during their shifts.

Authors reported the only way to protect the health of casino workers was a 100% smokefree workplace environment. The report also confirmed that ventilation systems cannot remove health risks.

Gaming industry workers typically suffer higher occupational exposure to secondhand smoke, putting them at greater risk for lung and heart disease and DNA damage. As has been proven time and time again, ventilation does not eliminate all the poisonous toxins and chemical components of secondhand smoke. The science is clear. Ventilation systems or air cleaning technologies may reduce odor, but they do not address the serious health risks caused by secondhand smoke exposure. Health studies of casino workers looking at actual bio-markers of exposure show that ventilation systems do little if anything to reduce worker exposure to secondhand smoke. Examples of bio-markers used to assess exposure to secondhand smoke include cotinine or tobacco-specific carcinogens like NNK. Secondhand tobacco smoke has a non-linear dose response, and there is no known safe level of exposure. Serious health impacts, especially to the cardiovascular system occur quickly at even at extremely low levels of exposure. The only way to eliminate the health hazards of secondhand smoke is with a 100% smokefree environment.

Making casinos 100% smokefree is the only way to completely protect both customers and workers from the dangers of secondhand smoke.

Casino customers and workers face higher risk for heart attacks. In a landmark report released in 2009, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) concluded that heart attack rates are reduced dramatically when smokefree laws are in place.

Even legislators who have states ([National Council of Legislators from Gaming States \(NCLGS\)](#)) with casinos in them have approved a landmark resolution in January 2009 encouraging state lawmakers to ensure that casinos are smokefree workplaces. This resolution was led by legislators in Delaware, the same State the opposition holds up as an example of a state losing money. Would legislators who witnessed a decline in revenue really lead the effort to encourage others states to make their casinos smoke free. I think not.

As I leave today, I respectfully urge you to support HB 682. Please help protect Pennsylvanians' health in three ways:

FIRST: Remove the 2,500 exemptions and close the loop holes to the Clean Indoor Air Act and vote HB 682 out of committee and into LAW!

SECOND: Create a level playing field for all businesses across the Commonwealth -- by prohibiting smoking in all indoor workplaces and public places, with no exemptions.

And THIRD: At present, the only means of effectively eliminating health risks associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity!

Thank you members of the committee for your time and consideration.