

## **Sample Testimony**

### **Issue: Ban on Indoor Tanning for Minors**

My name is Mary Smith and I am a dermatology nurse from Boston, Massachusetts. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on the serious problem of indoor tanning among minors and for your dedication to ensuring the proper safeguards are in place on this important issue.

A 2005 survey by the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) estimated that almost 30 million Americans visit indoor tanning salons each year. Of the 30 million, almost 21 million, or 70 percent, are women between the ages of 16 and 49 and approximately 2.3 million are teenagers.

Indoor tanning is dangerous. Many Americans are not aware of the harm that can be done by artificial tanning. Indoor tanning is not a safe alternative to sunbathing and provides no real health benefits. The risk of tanning is comparable to that of tobacco smoke, arsenic exposure, and gamma rays.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, with more than 3.5 million cases diagnosed annually. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) estimates that this year about 76,690 new cases of melanoma will be diagnosed and 9,480 people will die from the cancer. It is estimated that an additional 921,780 people in the United States are living with melanoma. The incidence of melanoma has been rising over the last three decades and occurs across the lifespan. In fact, since 1980, the incidence of melanoma among women under 30 has grown by 50 percent.

Melanoma is not the only dangerous side effect of tanning. A 2012 study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) also found an increased risk for non-melanoma skin cancers among patrons of indoor tanning beds. Treatment of non-melanoma skin cancers has increased by almost 77 percent between 1992 and 2006. Among the participants who reported sunbed use, the study found a 67 percent higher risk for developing squamous cell carcinoma and a 29 percent higher risk for developing basal cell carcinoma. This study also found a particularly high risk among those who tanned before age 25, demonstrating that even if tanning habits are changed later in life, the damage has been done. Additionally, excessive UV exposure can lead to damage to DNA in skin cells, premature skin aging, immune suppression, and eye damage.

The risk for developing melanoma is increased by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from indoor tanning beds; additionally, nearly 90 percent of non-melanoma skin cancers are associated with UV radiation exposure. AAD estimates that regular tanning bed use is associated with a 55 percent increase in the risk of developing melanoma, especially among women in their 20s. Additionally, the risk of these deadly cancers increases with each use.

As a dermatology nurse I see the harmful effects of indoor tanning every day. All too often I see patients who began tanning as a teenager – or are still a teenager – and have since developed irreversible skin damage and skin cancer. Living in a northern state, many people – too many people – turn to artificial tanning to keep a “golden glow” year round. But many of these people do not understand the danger that they are bringing upon themselves.

We need to protect our young patients. The International Agency on Cancer has classified tanning beds as cancer-causing agents and the World Health Organization has recommended a ban on the devices for those under age 18. A number of states have already taken steps to restrict the use of indoor tanning beds by minors. It is critical that Massachusetts follow suit and pass House Bill 1234, which would restrict indoor tanning to

those over age 18. This legislation is critical to protecting our children's – and our nation's – health.

Please act on HB 1234 to ensure that our daughters and sons are spared from skin cancer and other devastating side effects of indoor tanning.