



**House Public Health Committee**  
**HB 252 – Information for Parents on Secondhand Smoke**  
**Testimony by Claire Bocchini, MD on behalf of the Texas Pediatric Society**  
**March 13, 2019**

Good morning Chair Thompson and Committee Members,

My name is Claire Bocchini, and I am testifying today on behalf of myself and for the Texas Pediatric Society. I am testifying in support of HB 252. Thank you to Chair Thompson and the Public Health Committee for hearing this bill and to Representative Farrar for authoring it.

I am a pediatric infectious disease specialist, and I take care of many babies who are hospitalized with respiratory viral infections every year. As exposure to secondhand (and thirdhand) smoke increases the risk of severe respiratory infections and need for hospitalization, I talk to parents about the dangers of smoking around infants and children all the time. My colleagues and I are frustrated because although parents usually know the health risks related to smoking for themselves – they are frequently surprised when we talk to them about the negative impact their smoking has on their babies' health. We feel that it is extremely important that we as a community take every opportunity to educate parents on the dangers of secondhand smoke exposure – which is why my colleagues and I have advocated for this legislation for the past few years.

Secondhand smoke contains more than 7000 chemicals, and about 70 are known to cause cancer. Infants who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at greater risk of:

- Respiratory infections/ severe respiratory infections requiring hospitalization
- Ear infections
- Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained and unexpected death of an infant during their first year of life. SIDS is the leading cause of death in otherwise healthy infants. We know that chemicals in secondhand smoke appear to affect the brain in ways that interfere with the regulation of infants' breathing. Studies show that infants who die from SIDS have higher concentrations of nicotine in their lungs and higher levels of cotinine (a biological marker for secondhand smoke exposure) than infants who die from other causes.

Secondhand smoke can also lead to serious health problems in older children as well:

- Older children of parents who smoke get sick more often. Smoke affects lung development, and lungs grow less ideally than children who do not breathe secondhand smoke, leading to more bronchitis and pneumonia.

- Older children of parents who smoke have a harder time getting over a common cold and miss more days of school. They also commonly have chronic symptoms such as stuffy nose, headache, sore throat, eye irritation and hoarseness.
- Wheezing and coughing are more common in children of parents who smoke. Children exposed to secondhand smoke end up with more hospital visits. Their asthma attacks are more severe and frequent. A severe asthma attack can be fatal.
- Children of parents who smoke have more ear infections and have more operations for ear tubes.

Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at risk of long-term effects even into adulthood:

- Lung cancer
- Heart disease
- Cataracts
- Sadly, children of smokers are more likely to become smokers themselves.

Some parents try to decrease smoke exposure to their children by only smoking outside. What many parents do not know is that parents who only smoke outside are still exposing their children to the chemicals in secondhand smoke, which can be present on their clothing. *Thirdhand smoke* is the term used for the smoke and harmful toxins left behind on places where people have smoked previously. Some examples include the walls of a bar, upholstery on seats of car, or even a child's hair after an adult has been smoking near a child.

Not only is smoking bad for our children's health, it also costs taxpayers money.

According to Tobacco-FreeKids.org, in the state of TEXAS (2018):

- 7.4% of high school students smoke
- 15.7% (up from 14.5% in 2016) of adults smoke (3.3 million)
- 28,000 adults die each year from their own smoking
- 498,000 children now under 18 will ultimately die prematurely from smoking

What does that mean in dollars?

- \$8.85 billion in DIRECT annual health care costs in Texas from smoking
- \$1.96 billion in Texas Medicaid costs caused by smoking
- \$8.22 billion in smoking-related productivity losses
- Ultimately, taxpayers pay \$747 per household on smoking-caused government expenditures

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) emphasizes the need to educate parents about the dangers of secondhand smoke. In addition, information regarding already existing resources for smoking cessation should be provided. I have included one of the AAP's policy statements on protecting children from tobacco, nicotine, and tobacco smoke in my written testimony.

Topics to be included in a state education campaign could include the following:

- Smoking inside the home or car shared with an infant/child is dangerous to oneself and to the infant/child
- Smoking outside the home can still expose children to harmful toxins found in secondhand smoke, which can exist on clothes, hair, and other inanimate objects
- Secondhand smoke exposure is harmful to infants and children in the following ways:
  - Greater risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome
  - Greater risk of frequent infections including ear infections, bronchitis, and pneumonia
  - Greater risk of wheezing and coughing. If a child with asthma is exposed to secondhand smoke, their asthma attacks can be more severe and frequent.
  - Greater risk of severe illness with the common cold virus
  - Long term, greater risk of lung cancer, heart disease, and cataracts
  - Greater risk the child will become a smoker themselves
- If the caregiver is currently a smoker and is interested in quitting smoking, they can choose to do one or more of the following:
  - Talk to their child’s pediatrician
  - Talk to their adult primary care physician
  - Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW for free resources for smoking cessation

The Texas “Information for Parents of Newborn Children” document

([www.dshs.texas.gov/mch/parents\\_of\\_newborn.shtm](http://www.dshs.texas.gov/mch/parents_of_newborn.shtm)) is one great way to disseminate this information. This document is distributed to pregnant moms and moms of newborns and currently includes anticipatory guidance on a variety of topics such as immunizations, pertussis, cytomegalovirus, postpartum mood disorders, what to do when babies cry, the importance of putting the baby on the back to sleep, child safety seats, and heat stroke for a child left unattended in a motor vehicle. These are all very important topics – and given how many adults smoke in our state, and how frequently infants and children experience negative health outcomes due to secondhand smoke exposure – we believe secondhand smoke exposure is just as important. We strongly recommend that Texas include information on secondhand smoke exposure in this document.