

Re: H 5464 - SUPPORT

Dear Chair Abney and members of the House Finance Committee,

The CDC has well documented the mountain of evidence that second-hand smoke is harmful.

The 2014 Surgeon General's Report on The Health Consequences of Smoking— 50 Years of Progress, summarized additional evidence on the health effects of secondhand smoke exposure.

- In adults, secondhand smoke exposure causes stroke, lung cancer, and coronary heart disease, as well as adverse reproductive health effects in women, including low birth weight.
- Secondhand smoke exposure increases the risk of stroke by 20% to 30%.

These health risks are not heeded in Rhode Island when it comes to gambling venues. What is most troubling about the indoor smoking exemption for casinos is that it discriminates against a specific set of workers – casino staff.

The claim that these workers knowingly signed up to put themselves at risk or that they are well compensated does not justify the exposure that their position as laborers requires. Perhaps this is the best job they could find at the wage level they need to survive in our economy. They are economic hostages in these environments where they are forced to deal with the cumulative effects of the toxic air at their workplace.

As for the smokers – the % who smoke while they roll the dice or pull the arm of the slots are free to indulge their addiction(s) without regard to others breathing in the poisoned air they are creating. Do their rights to do so trump the safety of casino staff?

The answer today is “yes” if you work in a Rhode Island casino.

Recall if you are old enough the days when you took your family out to Denny's and were asked that dumb question – smoking or non-smoking? If you chose non-smoking, you knew you could still smell, taste, and inhale the toxic haze of the smoking section. *Because it was not feasible to segregate the air*, especially in an indoor environment.

No doubt some merchants worried that they would lose customers when the indoor smoking ban went into effect. But that business impact did not happen. Most people were relieved to be able to go out to a restaurant or bar and not be exposed to cancerous clouds!

Why has Rhode Island carved out and defended an exemption for casinos? Who are you (the legislators) protecting by keeping this health hazard in (one) place? Certainly not the staff who are risking their health to make a living.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Dumond, Rhode Island Resident

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