

Date: February 25, 2013

TO: The Honorable Mitch Greenlick, Chair
House Health Care Committee

FROM: Katrina Hedberg, MD, MPH
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SUBJECT: HB 2896

Chair Greenlick and members of the committee, I am Dr. Katrina Hedberg, State Epidemiologist with the Public Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority. I am here to testify in support of House Bill 2896, which would prevent persons less than 18 years of age from using commercial tanning beds.

Tanning beds produce ultraviolet radiation, which is classified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer as a Type 1 carcinogen, the same as cigarettes, radon and plutonium. Research has consistently shown a direct connection between indoor tanning and skin cancer, which is why The National Institutes of Health identified tanning beds as a known carcinogen in 2000.

More people develop skin cancer than all other cancers combined. While the most common skin cancers, including basal and squamous cell carcinomas, are relatively easily treated, melanoma is a form of skin cancer that can kill. Skin cancers affect a disproportionate number of Oregonians: in 2009, Oregon had the 7th highest rate of new cases of melanoma (35% higher than the national average), and the 4th highest death rate for skin cancer in the United States, according to the Center for Disease Control. While melanoma incidence increases with age, it is now the second most common cancer in both males and females 15-29 years of age.

The link between skin cancer and tanning beds is clear: recent studies have demonstrated that skin cancer risk increases 20% with the first indoor tanning session, and continues to increase about 2% with each additional session. In addition, skin cancer risk is higher for people who start indoor tanning at a young age: research shows that people who start tanning before age 35 years have a 75% higher risk of developing melanoma.

Use of tanning beds by teens is unfortunately common. According to the CDC's 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, 21% of high school girls in the US used tanning beds, and a 2012 Congressional investigation reported that 40% of white females ages 16-18 visit tanning facilities.

Because of the risk presented by tanning beds, many organizations have recommended against their use in minors. In 2003, the World Health Organization recommended that tanning beds should not be used by people under 18 years of age. The American Cancer Society and the American Academy of Dermatologists also support bans on tanning by minors. Last year, the Oregon Health Authority, Radiation Protection Services Advisory Committee unanimously voted to support a ban on underage tanning.

Restrictions on use of indoor tanning beds by persons less than 18 years of age have been implemented by several US states, including California, New York and Vermont, and at least 33 states have considered legislation to prohibit tanning by minors, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures. In addition, cities such as Chicago and Springfield, Illinois have prohibitions in place.

Given the risks presented by indoor tanning, minors need the added protection proposed by HB 2896. Through Oregon Administrative Rule, Chapter 333-Division 119, Radiation Protection Services currently regulates more than 500 commercial tanning facilities and over 2,000 tanning beds in Oregon. Facilities are inspected every three years for compliance with customer protection related to skin typing, session frequency and duration, operator training, bed maintenance and sanitation. If HB 2896 is signed into law, Radiation Protection Services will develop administrative rule requirements regarding proof and documentation of age, signage and tanning operator record-keeping, and enforcement protocols.

In summary, the provisions of HB 2896 preventing persons under 18 years of age from using tanning beds would allow Oregon to enhance its protection of a vulnerable population from unnecessary risks associated with tanning bed use.

We would be pleased to provide the committee with additional information as needed. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with this testimony.