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HB 2896

From The Desk of Rep. Peter Buckley

The Honorable Peter Buckley
Oregon House of Representatives

Dear Members of the Oregon House of Representatives,

On behalf of the Oregon Pediatric Society, I urge your support of House Bill 2896. As the Oregon Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the premier child advocacy organization in the state, we represent approximately 300 pediatricians and the communities they serve. We know that the health of children is of paramount importance to Oregon, and ask you to support House Bill 2896

House Bill 2896 would prevent children younger than 18 from using indoor UV tanning devices. Our experience tells us that despite efforts to protect children from UV radiation, we can and must do more to protect young people from skin cancer, especially from the unnecessary dangers of indoor tanning. In the past three decades, more people have had skin cancer than all other cancers combined. Further, the disease impacts Oregonians disproportionately. The melanoma death rate for women in Oregon is the highest in the country, and the state has the nation's 4th highest melanoma death rate overall.

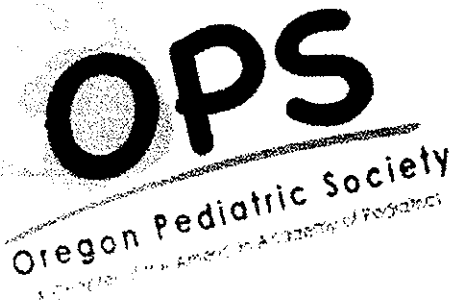
We know that limiting exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light, especially in young people, is one of the best ways to prevent this disease. Children receive no tangible benefit from artificial tanning, other than the cosmetic effect, and we feel the risks mitigate any possible benefit.

Simply put, artificial tanning causes cancer and they should be off limits to minors. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) categorizes tanning beds as a Level 1 carcinogen, the same designation it gives to tobacco. UV tanning beds are in the same category as tobacco, arsenic and mustard gas.

Many youth and families may not understand the extent of the risks associated with UV exposure, which are even higher for minors than adults. One study found that people who engaged in indoor tanning before turning 35 had a 75% higher risk of developing melanoma; the younger the exposure, the higher the risk.

Discouraging sunbed use or requiring parental authorization alone has not proven to be effective in reducing this risk. Research has shown that the use of tanning beds is as high as 40 percent among 16-18 year olds and this fact coincides with a recent rise in melanoma incidence among young U.S. women.

No one needs to use indoor tanning facilities, and there are safe alternatives that will allow children to achieve the cosmetic effect they seek. Spray tanning employs an FDA approved chemical that has been used since 1976, and has been deemed safe for children. This option would allow tanning parlors to continue to survive, while preventing cancer among children and young adults.



This should not be an issue of personal liberty and parental rights. It has been shown that education about these issues is ineffective and that as many as 40% of adolescent girls between ages 16 - 18 regularly use tanning beds. Today, minors in Oregon can access indoor tanning devices as long as they have a one-time parental consent. The child could be 11 or 17, and there is no limit on age or the number of times that a child can engage in tanning.

We would not allow children to smoke cigarettes with parental permission. We urge you to consider the devastating impact of indoor tanning on children, and acknowledge the fact that it can be as damaging as cigarettes. We must protect children from a clear and present threat, we urge you to support this bill.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Hoffman, M.D. FAAP
Co-Chair Legislative Committee