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Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Russo, and members of the Health Committee, thank you for allowing my colleague Representative Hillyer and me to testify in support of House Bill 159, which will, quite simply, limit the use of tanning beds to those over the age of 18.

We are concerned because skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States and is potentially lethal. Local dermatologists who noted a significant increase in skin cancer among younger Ohioans in their care shared their concerns with me recently, causing me to research the issue and bring this bill forward jointly with Representative Hillyer. Because I have psoriasis, and used sun lamps under the care of a dermatologist, I was already aware of the dangers of overexposure to ultraviolet rays. This is also personal for me because three members of my family developed melanomas and required surgery. Fortunately we caught them early so they survived the diagnosis; many do not.

Current estimates made by the American Academy of Dermatology indicates that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in her or his life. Those who have skin that burns easily, have blond or red hair, and have a history of excessive sun exposure and tanning bed use are among the most vulnerable. Research shows that even minimal use of tanning beds prior to the age of 35 can increase one's risk of melanoma by 59% and the risk continually grows with each use. Rates of melanomas have been increasing at an alarming rate, with twice as many cases in 2011 as in 1982. Tanning beds deliver ultraviolet light ten times the intensity of sunlight and have been recognized as a significant health hazard at the federal level. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services classifies UV radiation from tanning beds as "carcinogenic to humans" and the FDA has issued a Black Box warning against the use of indoor tanning by minors under the age of 18.

This bill is vitally important, as the 14-18 age group are not as cognizant of about the long-term impacts on their health. Indeed, a recent study found a 20% prevalence of tanning bed use among high school girls in the US. As a middle school teacher for many years, I have long had the welfare of children at heart and very much want to protect their futures. 18 states and Washington, D.C. have already enacted bans on the use of tanning beds by minors under 18. I believe it is critical that Ohio join this group and ask for your support of the bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this important piece of legislation. Along with Representative Hillyer, I would be happy to answer any questions the committee members may have.