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House Bill 159 – Prohibit Indoor Tanning Use by Minors
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Thank you Chairman Lipps, Vice Chair Holmes, Ranking Member Boyd, and members of the Ohio House Health Committee, for the opportunity to give testimony today supporting House Bill 159. As a practicing physician specializing in dermatology and skin pathology, this issue is something that is incredibly meaningful to me and many patients I care for.

I was raised in Ohio in Tuscarawas County, and I recently returned to Ohio this past year to work in Westerville in private practice. Previous to this past year, I've spent most of my career in an academic medical center treating patients, diagnosing skin biopsies as a dermatopathologist, and teaching residents training in dermatology. A large component of my time and energy has been spent working in a multidisciplinary cancer center with physicians in various specialties in a program treating patients with advanced skin cancer. Our skin cancer program focused heavily on melanoma, which I raise because melanoma is the most common deadly form of skin cancer, and parenthetically but relevant to this legislation it is the second most common form of cancer in young women age 15-29.² Even during my relatively short time in practice—15 years—I've witnessed the incidence of skin cancer increase substantially, especially among young women, many of whom endorse a history of indoor tanning.

The increase in skin cancer, especially among young people, and skin cancer's relationship to indoor tanning has led me to previously advocate for similar legislation in Tennessee and is why I'm here today. I've heard the counterarguments and understand that some people feel prohibition of indoor tanning in individuals under 18 may be too extreme, or perhaps even an overreach impinging parental rights. I also recognize there is a potential impact on businesses offering tanning services, and I've heard the false claims surrounding Vitamin D production from tanning beds. I've weighed these and other positions and taken them very seriously. However, I am here today because I believe that protecting Ohio citizens, specifically children--and our duty to do so--outweighs all those counterarguments.

Enacting HB 159 would protect children from a carcinogen. Cumulative damage to cell's DNA in the form of intentional UV exposure is a known carcinogen, leading to skin cancer, including melanoma: beginning this exposure artificially and intentionally in childhood is especially damaging due to the cumulative nature of cellular damage that occurs over time. There is strong evidence that exposure to tanning beds increases the risk of nearly all skin cancers, including melanoma, especially in women 45 and younger, as a function of early exposure to UV radiation from indoor tanning.³⁻⁴ At one major international melanoma center, one of my colleagues performed a study where they discovered the risk of only 10 indoor tanning sessions increased the risk of melanoma developing at a young age by 2 fold, a striking number. Their patients were diagnosed with melanoma as young as 18-39 years old. In another recent study, 63 women who were diagnosed with melanoma before the age of 30 were asked if they used tanning beds. 97% of these women answered yes.¹

¹ Lazovich D, Isaksson Vogel R, Weinstock, M et al. Association Between Indoor Tanning and Melanoma in Younger Men and Women. JAMA Derm 2016; 152 (3): 268.

Current law in Ohio allows children under 16 to use tanning services if accompanied by a parent or guardian, and 16 and 17 year-old children can use tanning services with parental consent. There have been similar restrictions enacted by other states, and though these are intended to limit access to tanning by minors, unfortunately compliance is low and these measures appear to have very little effect on the rates of indoor tanning use. Rates of indoor tanning use by minors in states with parental consent laws are similar to rates in states with no consent restrictions at all. It is just not enough.

Relying on parental consent restrictions for tanning use by children also assumes that parents are fully aware of the serious risks associated with indoor tanning. While of course the vast majority of parents would never knowingly expose their children to a carcinogen, parents are not always cognizant of the long-term risks of skin cancer from UV exposure--even just seasonal or intermittent exposure--especially a deadly skin cancer like melanoma, particularly if parents themselves view indoor tanning favorably or utilize indoor tanning services themselves. But the fact is, indoor tanning is dangerous for everyone, but exposure to indoor tanning is especially dangerous at such a young age.

Unfortunately, I've witnessed firsthand the association between skin cancer and young patients with a history of indoor tanning. Some of the most tragic cases of advanced melanoma in our cancer center's skin cancer program occurred in young women, almost always with a history of tanning. I vividly remember one of our patients starting chemotherapy immediately after delivering her baby, knowing that her prognosis was poor and that she may not see her child grow up. She wished someone would have stopped her from tanning when she was younger when she simply didn't know better. It's a common sentiment among patients: regretting tanning, especially when young, when they felt invincible and were more concerned with an upcoming school dance or beach trip. I believe these tragic cases can be reduced by restricting access to minors who quite frankly don't appreciate the damage they are doing to themselves. By prohibiting minors from indoor tanning, I believe both anecdotal experience and evidence shows that we can protect our citizens from potentially deadly skin cancers.

There is abundant precedent for restricting access to indoor tanning. Internationally, minors are prohibited from using indoor tanning in several countries including Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany, Belgium, and so on. As of 2021, 20 states and DC. have passed total bans on minors using commercial indoor tanning services, and I strongly believe it is time for Ohio to join them.

To conclude my testimony today, I encourage members of the committee to support HB 159 to protect Ohio's children and as an important step in continuing to improve public health in our state. Thank you once again for hearing my remarks on this legislation today, and I would also be glad to answer any questions you might have for me at this time.

²Cust A, Armstrong BK, Goumas C et al. Sunbed use during adolescence and early adulthood is associated with increased risk of early-onset melanoma. *Int J Cancer*. 2011; 128:2425-35.

³Ting W, Schultz K, Cac NN, et al. Tanning bed exposure increases the risk of malignant melanoma. *Int J Dermatol*. 2007 Dec;46(12):1253-7.

⁴Colantonio S, Bracken MB, Beecker J. The association of indoor tanning and melanoma in adults: systematic review and meta-analysis. *J Am Acad Dermatol* 2014;70:847-57.

⁵Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) program 18 registries. Data run July 25, 2018.