



State Senator
TINA MAHARATH

3rd District

Sponsor Testimony
Senator Tina Maharath
Senate Bill 82
Judiciary Committee
Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Chairman Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, Vice Chairman McColley and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 82. If passed, this bill would prohibit any person in the state of Ohio from smoking in a motor vehicle if a child under six is a passenger.

According to the Public Health Law Center, roughly two in five children in the United States are exposed to secondhand smoke. Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome, respiratory infections, asthma, slowed lung growth, and other respiratory symptoms. Exposing passengers, both children and adults, to secondhand smoke in the confined space of a car is extremely dangerous, but it is particularly dangerous to children whose smaller bodies proportionally take in a larger volume of air and are still developing.

Recent legislative action by several states and territories prohibits smoking in cars while children are present. Arkansas, Maine, Utah, Guam, Puerto Rico, California, Oregon, Vermont, Louisiana, and Virginia have all passed laws prohibiting smoking in vehicles while children are present at ages ranging from eight to eighteen. According to Health Policy Institute of Ohio's 2017 Health Value Dashboard, Ohio ranks 49th out of 50 when it comes to states with the highest percent of children exposed to secondhand smoke.¹

The American Academy of Pediatrics 2015 policy statement on Tobacco, Nicotine, and Tobacco Smoke, recommends both legislative and educational interventions to promote smoke-free vehicles when children are present. In 2007, the American Academy of Pediatrics adopted a resolution encouraging its member state and local chapters to "support and advocate for changes in existing state and local laws and policies that protect children from secondhand smoke exposure by prohibiting smoking in any vehicle while a legal minor is in the vehicle."

¹ https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/HVD_TobaccoCloserLook_Final_04262017.pdf



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I would also like to note that more than half of all U.S. states have smoke-free workplace laws. Although these laws are popular with the public and are largely self-enforcing, they fail to protect children where they most often face exposure.

Members of Judiciary committee, I ask for the favorable passage of SB 82 and I would be happy to answer any questions you have at this time.