



## American Public Health Association

*Working for a Healthier World*

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Testimony of  
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before the  
D.C. Council Committee on Public Works and the Environment  
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The American Public Health Association (APHA) strongly supports the proposed Bill 14-441, *The Smoke-Free Workplaces Act of 2003*, that promotes Smoke-Free work environments in all enclosed public and private workplaces and establishes penalties for the violation of smoke-free workplace regulations in the District of Columbia. APHA has long been an advocate of eliminating tobacco use based on the scientific evidence that its use remains the leading cause of preventable illness and death in this country.

The American Public Health Association (APHA) is the oldest and one of the largest organizations of public health professionals in the world, representing more than 50,000 members from over 50 occupations of public health. With its rich history in the preservation of public health, APHA demonstrates its unyielding commitment to the issue of tobacco control through education and advocacy and has been influencing policies and setting priorities in public health for over 130 years. In fact, in 1959, in advance of the first Surgeon General's report on Smoking and Health, APHA went on record about the deleterious impacts of smoking on health and urged health authorities to design broad educational efforts to prevent smoking. As a result of this public health advocacy, the Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health was released in 1964 and re-confirmed that tobacco use, particularly cigarette smoking, is a health hazard warranting significant attention in the United States. Tobacco use is cited as the chief avoidable cause of morbidity and mortality in our society, responsible for more than 430,000 deaths in the United States each year. APHA currently has a number of policy statements related to tobacco use. These policy statements document that environmental tobacco smoke poses a major risk of illness and death in non-smokers. The statements also support clean indoor air laws and among other things urges smoke-free work sites.

In 1993, the Environmental and Protection Agency (EPA) officially classified environment tobacco smoke as a Group A carcinogen to which there is no safe levels of exposure. Smoking harms the health of smokers and those around them. Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is associated with the increased risk of lung cancer deaths, and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases. In this country, ETS kills an estimated 35,000-65,000 adult non-smokers from heart disease and 3,000 non-smokers from lung cancer (California Environmental Protection Agency, 1997 and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 1993.)

Healthy People 2010, the national action plan for improving the health of all Americans, has more recently documented the impact of tobacco use. As such 5 of the 21 tobacco-related 2010 objectives address secondhand smoke. According to the federal experts, each year, because of exposure to secondhand smoke, an estimated 3,000 nonsmokers die of lung cancer and 150,000-300,00 infants and children under age 18 months experience lower respiratory tract infections. Asthma and other respiratory conditions are often triggered or worsened by tobacco smoke as well.

Given the compelling data, I urge the Council to pass this proposed legislation for it is in the best interest of all its citizens and numerous visitors. In passing this proposed legislation, the District of Columbia would join others across the nation, such as California, New York and our neighbor, Montgomery County, in reaffirming government's commitment to safe and healthy environments.