

October 2, 2023



Testimony of the American Lung Association
Opposing Assembly Bill 451
In front of the Assembly Committee on Committee on State Affairs

Chair Swearingen and members of the committee,

The American Lung Association is the oldest voluntary public health organization in the United States. One of our four strategic imperatives is to create a tobacco-free future, and smokefree air laws are vital to that effort.

We write to oppose Assembly Bill 451, which would undermine Wisconsin's smokefree air law by allowing cigar and pipe tobacco smoking in additional so-called "tobacco bars." Current law defines a tobacco bar as a tavern that generates 15 percent or more of its annual gross income from the sale of cigars and pipe tobacco. However, it is limited to "tobacco bars" that existed at the time our state's smokefree air law was passed in 2009. This proposed legislation would allow cigar and pipe smoking in **any** bar that meets the 15 percent sales threshold, expanding the universe of places where indoor secondhand smoke exposure could occur in the state.

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States, responsible for the deaths of 480,000 Americans annually.ⁱ An additional 16 million Americans live with a disease caused by tobacco.ⁱⁱ In Wisconsin, more than 13.3% of adults smoke and 22.2% of high school students use a tobacco product.ⁱⁱⁱ On top of that, smoking costs our state more than \$2.6 billion each year.

Even though these numbers are alarming, we have made significant progress in addressing tobacco addiction and youth initiation in our state.

Allowing more tobacco bars creates a significant loophole in clean indoor air protections and weakens decades of progress in preventing exposure to secondhand smoke and reducing tobacco use. We should not go backwards.

Wisconsin's clean indoor air law is extremely popular,^{iv} and has been good for health and good for business. **Please oppose AB 451.** I would be happy to be a resource to you on this issue, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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ⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.lung.org/research/sotc/state-grades/wisconsin>

^{iv} Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Adults. February 2023.

https://www.cuph.org/uploads/2/5/8/5/25855930/tobacco_facts_adults_2023_february__1_.pdf