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Advocates make their case about need for smokefree legislation before House committee

Multiple hearings planned throughout March

Lansing, Mich. – Advocates for smokefree workplaces made their case today before the House Regulatory Reform Committee when they testified on smokefree legislation and urged its immediate passage. Four bills have been introduced, three of which were referred to the House Regulatory Reform committee, which continued a series of hearings this week.

The Campaign for Smokefree Air (CSA) is continuing to work with lawmakers in the House and Senate to make Michigan the 36th state to embrace smokefree air and protect all workers from exposure to the dangerous toxins in secondhand smoke. Thirty-five other states have passed legislation to protect workers from secondhand smoke and more than half of Americans now live in a city or state with smokefree workplace protection laws.

“Michigan workers deserve to work in environments that are smokefree. No one should have to choose between their health and a paycheck,” said Judy Stewart, campaign manager for CSA. “There is a groundswell of support for this issue and the Regulatory Reform Committee should recommend a comprehensive smokefree bill to the House floor for a vote.”

The House Regulatory Reform Committee listened as doctors, researchers, business owners and victims of secondhand smoke gave their testimonies on why Michigan should go smokefree.

“The evidence is clear. This is no longer a scientific issue. The Surgeon General’s Report, which summarizes countless studies, concluded that secondhand smoke can cause ill-health and even premature death,” said Dr. Greg Holzman, Chief Medical Executive for the Michigan Department of Community Health. “The time to pass smokefree legislation in Michigan is now. Lawmakers must pass a comprehensive statewide smokefree law.”

Polls conducted in April 2005 and January 2008 consistently showed overwhelming support for smokefree workplaces across Michigan. In 2006, the U.S. Surgeon General released a report concluding that the only way to protect workers and residents from deadly secondhand smoke exposure is through comprehensive smokefree air laws.

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Committee hearings will conclude next week.

Today's testimonies included Dr. Greg Holzman, Chief Medical Executive of the Michigan Department of Community Health and Cliff Douglas, Executive Director of the Tobacco Research Network at the University of Michigan, who both testified about research showing that ventilation systems do not work and the only way to eliminate secondhand smoke exposure is through smokefree legislation. Tom Cleveland, a cancer survivor with voice prosthesis testified about his difficult battle with cancer and shared that he can not breathe in establishments that allow smoking. Michelle Precourt Debbink, a University of Michigan Medical school student testified about her experiences working in a bar to work her way through college and the secondhand smoke exposure she endured.

About CSA

The Campaign for Smokefree Air is a grassroots coalition with more than 270 members, including leadership from the American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, American Lung Association of Michigan, Michigan Health & Hospital Association, and Michigan State Medical Society, as well as other statewide groups that are committed to passing a smokefree workplace law. For more information about the Campaign for Smokefree Air, please visit www.MakeMIAirSmokefree.org.

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