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October 3, 2007

Representative Tom Brinkman, Chairman  
Commerce and Labor Committee  
Ohio House of Representatives  
3215 Hardisty Avenue  
Cincinnati, OH 45208

Dear Chairman Brinkman and Members of the Commerce and Labor Committee:

I write to support Ohio House Bill 230, which is sponsored by Representative Courtney Combs and other members of the House. The law, if enacted, will prohibit minors from using commercial tanning parlors.

As many people my age (I was born in 1962), I enjoyed tanning when I was young. I can recall donning commercial oils that were intended to increase one's tan and then spending hours around a pool or in our favorite lake. I have a less pleasant memory of the occasions when this practice resulted in sunburn. In fact, a sun burn was the only threat to which my siblings, friends, and I were sensitized to. Far less was known in the 1970s about the threats of tanning than is known today.

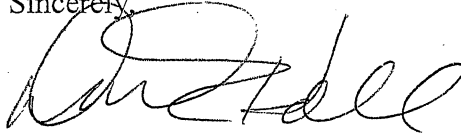
We now know that ultraviolet radiation can cause skin cancer, premature aging of the skin, cataracts, and tunnel vision and other eye damage. Excessive ultraviolet rays can cause dangerous interactions with prescription drugs and they can aggravate some diseases and conditions. Bottom line, unprotected exposure to the sun is dangerous. Even greater, however, is the threat from tanning parlor rays, as they penetrate the skin deeper.

HB 230 seeks to address this threat in a very strategic way. It targets the most vulnerable population from the greatest threat. I have recently been made aware of research that indicates a significant rise in the number of skin cancer cases in the past twenty years. The American Medical Association, Ohio State Medical Association, and the American Academy of Dermatology and Ohio Dermatological Association have all expressed concern for the epidemic in skin cancer in the United States. Moreover, these organizations have also recommended the enactment of legislation banning minors from tanning beds. While I believe the decision to tan, and to engage in other hazardous activities, is a personal freedom for an adult, our nation has long established protections for our most vulnerable. One of our most vulnerable populations is our juveniles.

Both the social pressures and biological influences of youth draw them to tanning parlors. Their immaturity and lack of experience contribute to disproportionately low sense of risk and high sense of need to be tanned. While it is incumbent for governments and our society to continuously respect the role of parents and the family relationship, we must also recognize that contemporary parents are confronted with a myriad of threats to their children and assisting them in eliminating one threat will be welcomed by many parents. For others, the law may be viewed as an unwelcome intrusion into the family relationship. However, we have long drawn a line between ultra hazardous activities that are not essential to family life, health, or work, which we ban, and other less hazardous activities that are left to the discretion of parents. The consumption of alcohol and tobacco are examples of the former. I believe the use of commercial tanning parlors falls into this category.

Accordingly, I urge you to support HB 230.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel E. Hall", written in a cursive style.

Daniel E. Hall, J.D., Ed.D.