

August 1, 2007

Representative John White
Chair, Health Committee
Ohio House of Representatives

Re: House Bill 230

Dear Chairman White:

I am writing to ask your support for House Bill 230 that will prohibit children under the age of 18 from using commercial tanning parlors without a prescription from a physician.

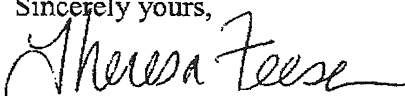
I am a parent of a 17 year old girl and 16 year boy residing in Centerville, Ohio. I have worked for the past 25 years in the health care field, and more specifically, as administrator of a large dermatology practice and national skin pathology laboratory. Over these years I have seen a tremendous increase in the number of skin cancers and melanomas we diagnose in our laboratory. I have paid special attention to the age of the patients as I have noted that the average age of the affected patients is getting younger and I have teenage children.

Teenagers, especially girls, experience much peer pressure regarding their appearance. A tan is considered by our young people to be beautiful and many of my daughter's friends regularly pay to go to tanning parlors to expose their skin and eyes to harmful artificial ultraviolet rays. My daughter also feels this peer pressure but I have been able to convince her that tanning is harmful and promotes skin cancer. Believe me, convincing a 16 or 17 year old girl to not tan when many of her friends are "weekly tanners" was a battle not easily won! There are safe alternatives to exposure to harmful ultraviolet rays and my daughter uses a "spray on tan" offered at her health club.

In one month my daughter will turn 18 and attend college full time. I realize that the influence and values that I have tried to instill in her will always be with her but she will make her own decisions as an adult. I am hopeful that these decisions include avoidance of cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, tanning and other harmful addictions.

As a parent of two teenagers approaching adulthood, I am fully aware of the limited amount of time I have to provide guidance, reasoning, and "house rules" before they make their own decisions. There are so many societal pressures on children that I would consider it helpful as a parent if Ohio passed a law making it illegal for children under 18 to go to tanning parlors without a doctor's prescription. This law, similar to prohibition of cigarette sales to minors, would send the message loud and clear that exposure to artificial ultraviolet rays is a causative agent for skin cancer. And this would be one less battle I would have to fight against societal pressure on teenagers.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue. I am hopeful that you will vote to protect our children from exposure to artificial ultraviolet light and help keep them healthy well into their senior years.

Sincerely yours,

Theresa Feese

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