

February 4, 2025

Dear Senator/Representative,

The undersigned organizations urge you to protect the integrity of the 44 popular and effective municipal smoke-free laws by opposing House Bill 211. This bill proposes to prohibit local governments from enforcing laws regulating indoor cigar smoking in cigar bars and other establishments.

Since 2003, Kentucky cities and counties have wisely opted to protect employees, residents, and visitors from exposure to secondhand smoke by enacting ordinances making indoor workplaces and public places smoke-free. Communities from Prestonsburg to Paducah have chosen to prohibit indoor smoking, including cigar smoking, equally in all establishments.

HB 211 would create a loophole that will severely weaken these important laws putting population health protections and healthcare cost savings in jeopardy. Kentucky communities with *strong* smoke-free laws are associated with a lower likelihood of hospitalization for COPD, fewer hospitalizations for heart attacks, fewer ER visits for asthma, leading to significant healthcare cost savings. Kentucky communities with *partial* smoke-free laws that exempt certain kinds of businesses like bars do not confer these same benefits.

While the bill proposes to apply to cigar bars, any bar or restaurant that has a valid alcohol license, is 21 and over, and generates any income from cigar sales or humidior rentals could allow indoor cigar smoking. Once cigar bars are exempt, there is nothing to stop other bars from becoming cigar bars. Traditional cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos are sold in a variety of flavors that appeal to youth including watermelon, cherry, grape, chocolate, and menthol. In communities that allow indoor cigar smoking, youth and young adults may perceive that it's socially acceptable to use cigars, and they may get the false impression that cigars are safer or a status symbol.

Secondhand smoke has been proven to cause heart disease, stroke, cancer, and sudden infant death syndrome. Cigar smoke can produce higher levels of cancer-causing substances and toxins. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention make it clear that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. While ventilation systems can reduce odor, they cannot eliminate the particles and toxins from secondhand smoke. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers states that the only way to eliminate indoor exposure to environmental tobacco smoke is to ban all indoor smoking activity.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to reject HB 211's proposal to reverse the decision of 44 Kentucky communities to prohibit secondhand smoke exposure inside cigar bars and other similar establishments.

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network

American Heart Association

American Lung Association

Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

Kentucky Cancer Foundation

Kentucky Medical Association

Kentucky Nurses Association

Kentucky Voices for Health