

January 27, 2026

Dear Representative:

The undersigned organizations urge you to protect the integrity of the 44 popular and effective smoke-free laws adopted by local lawmakers in communities across the commonwealth by opposing House Bill 194.^{1, 2} This bill proposes to prohibit local governments from enforcing existing laws or passing new ordinances regulating indoor cigar and pipe smoking in cigar bars.

Since 2003, Kentucky cities from Bellevue to Bowling Green and counties Oldham to Owsley have wisely opted to protect employees, residents, and visitors from exposure to cancer-causing secondhand smoke by enacting ordinances prohibiting indoor smoking, including cigar smoking, *equally in all workplaces and public places*.

HB 194 preempts local authority and creates a loophole that will severely weaken these local laws putting population health protections and healthcare cost savings in jeopardy. Kentucky communities with *strong* smoke-free laws are associated with fewer new cases of lung cancer, a lower likelihood of hospitalization for COPD, fewer hospitalizations for heart attacks, fewer ER visits for asthma, leading to significant healthcare cost savings.³⁻⁷ Kentucky communities with *partial* smoke-free laws that exempt certain kinds of businesses like bars do not confer these same benefits.

A special carve-out for cigar bars sends the wrong message to Kentucky's youth. Traditional cigars, little cigars, and cigarillos are sold in a variety of flavors that appeal to youth including sour apple, cherry, grape, chocolate, and menthol.⁸ 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.

While ventilation systems can reduce odor, they cannot eliminate the particles and toxins from secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke has been proven to cause heart disease, stroke, cancer, and sudden infant death syndrome.⁹ The CDC makes it clear there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.¹⁰ Cigar smoke has higher levels of cancer-causing substances and toxins and more tar than cigarettes.¹¹ 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.¹²

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 only 15% of income from cigar and related product sales or humidor rentals could allow indoor cigar and pipe smoking. Once cigar bars are exempt, there is little to stop other bars and retailers from becoming cigar bars, too.

We strongly urge the General Assembly to reject HB 194's proposal to reverse the decision of 44 Kentucky communities to prohibit secondhand smoke exposure inside cigar bars and other similar establishments.

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
Kentucky Youth Advocates

References

1. Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy, *Counties/cities with smoke-free community-wide ordinances/regulations in Kentucky*, <https://breathe.uky.edu/tobacco-policy/smoke-free-communities/ordinance-database>; Published 2026. Accessed January 26, 2026.
2. An Act relating to cigar bars, HB 194, Ky. Gen. Assem., 2026 Regular Session. (2026).
3. Hahn EJ, Rayens MK, Wiggins AT, Gan W, Brown HM, Mullett TW. Lung cancer incidence and the strength of municipal smoke-free ordinances. *Cancer*. 2018;124(2):374-380.
4. Hahn EJ, Rayens MK, Adkins S, Simpson N, Frazier S, Mannino DM. Fewer hospitalizations for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease in communities with smoke-free public policies. *Am J Public Health*. 2014;104(6):1059-1065.
5. Hahn EJ, Rayens MK, Burkhart PV, Moser DK. Smoke-free laws, gender, and reduction in hospitalizations for acute myocardial infarction. *Public Health Rep*. 2011; 126:826-833.
6. Rayens MK, Burkhart PV, Zhang M, et al. Reduction in asthma-related emergency department visits after implementation of a smoke-free law. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2008;122(3):537-541.e533.
7. Hahn EJ, Rayens MK, Butler KM, Zhang M, Durbin E, Steinke D. Smoke-free laws and adult smoking prevalence. *Prev Med*. 2008;47(2):206-209.
8. Truth Initiative. *Cigars: Facts, stats, and regulations*. <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/traditional-tobacco-products/cigars-facts-stats-and-regulations>. Accessed January 26, 2026.
9. 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: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health; 2014.
10. U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services. *The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office on Smoking and Health; 2006.
11. National Cancer Institute. *Cigar Smoking and Cancer*. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/tobacco/cigars-fact-sheet> Accessed January 26, 2026.
12. American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers. *ASHRAE position document on environmental tobacco smoke*; <https://www.ashrae.org/file%20library/about/position%20documents/pd-on-environmental-tobacco-smoke-english.pdf>; Published 2023. Accessed January 26, 2026.