

In reference to the Public Health Amendment (Tobacco Free Generation) Bill of 2014

29 May 2015

Dear Honorable Members of the Parliament of Tasmania:

As a thoracic surgical oncologist, I have seen the suffering and death affecting patients who smoked and its impact on their loved ones. I understand the personal psychologic dynamics that initially got them addicted as young teenagers.

In my work as the Director of the tobacco control program in the state of Arkansas, I have seen how uphill the fight can be against the extremely well-resourced Tobacco Industry. We had a youth group that was very active and passionate about tobacco control. Having a Tobacco Free Generation law would have been ever so much more effective in protecting their health and longevity.

I am globally active in the area of the human rights based approach to tobacco control. Using a human rights based approach means that the government needs to understand their duty to protect the health rights of their citizens - adults and children. I am very heartened when governments around the world do take strong action to protect the health of their citizens - even when it means foregoing the financial benefits of aligning with the oligopoly of the transnational tobacco industries. Australia has been a leading example of standing up to the tobacco industry. I am proud when leaders reject the industry's financial influence in order to maximize the health rights of their citizens.

I partnered with several colleagues, including Dr. Oh, on a 2010 paper that reported on the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes of women in European countries. This survey reported on over 2,000 European women smokers who stated why they started smoking. It showed that peer influence (62%) and looking cool/grown-up (26%) are the only two substantial reasons given (all others < 7% each).

Our Human Rights and Tobacco Control Network, which I have the privilege to lead, held a pre-conference workshop at the 2012 World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH) in Singapore. This workshop introduced a number of globally influential tobacco control experts to the concept of the Tobacco Free Generation. There was a terrifically enthusiastic response which culminated in Margaret Chan's (Director of the World Health Organization) endorsement at this most recent WCTOH and its Final Declaration commending Tasmania's initiative. The Tobacco Free Generation has been considered globally as an important "End Game": the ending of the death and disease caused by tobacco.

Please - be the first to initiate this innovative and powerful measure that will allow the children of the world to grow up tobacco free. Please - give the children the opportunity to not die from the leading cause of the majority of non-communicable diseases in the world today. Please - do recognize that the world is watching and urging you to act!

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