



For Immediate Release

March 19, 2007
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North Carolina Alliance for Health

Historic legislation to limit exposure to deadly secondhand smoke passes House Judiciary Committee

Durham – Referring to North Carolina House Bill 259 that calls for smoke-free environments at work and in public settings, NC Alliance for Health executive director Pam Seamans commended Rep. Hugh Holliman (D-Davidson) for his dedication and commitment to protecting consumers and workers from deadly secondhand smoke. “The Alliance’s goal is to protect all of the workers in North Carolina from the health dangers of secondhand smoke and thanks to Representative Holliman, we now have a bill that is a catalyst to achieving this goal. We support Rep. Holliman with his historic action for wanting a stronger, healthier policy for all North Carolinians.”

The North Carolina Alliance for Health, an independent, statewide coalition of individuals, businesses and nonprofit organizations, advocates for health improvement policies in North Carolina. They support smoke-free worksites and public places and support House Bill 259. In addition, Seamans praised the House Judiciary 1 Committee members for their vote to take this important legislation to the House floor.

In releasing the statement, Seamans said, “While this bill does not protect every North Carolina worker, this bill will protect the vast majority of workers and is clearly a step in the right direction. Secondhand smoke is a serious public health threat and should be addressed as such.”

As this bill is written, it would ban smoking in all worksites and public places except in the following locations: private residences, retail or wholesale tobacco shops, tobacco manufacturing or processing facilities, designated guest rooms in lodging establishments, private clubs and for medical research uses. Seamans noted that currently in North Carolina only 76 percent of white-collar workers, 52 percent of blue-collar workers and 43 percent of food service workers currently benefit from voluntary smoke-free policies. “This bill will really move these numbers in the right direction. Think of the lives that will be saved.”

According to the US Surgeon General, there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is proven to cause lung cancer, heart disease, serious respiratory illnesses such as bronchitis, asthma, low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome. It is responsible for tens of thousands of deaths in the United States each year.

“North Carolinians want smoke-free places to live and work,” Seamans said citing a September 2006 Elon poll that showed some 86 percent of North Carolinians agree or strongly agree that

employees in North Carolina should be able to work in a smoke-free environment. It also showed that 64.7 percent of the respondents support or strongly support a law in North Carolina that would not allow smoking in restaurants and bars.

“The Alliance believes no individual should have to breathe secondhand smoke and put their health at risk as a condition of employment. Everyone has the right to breathe clean air,” emphasized Seaman.

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