

COALITION ON THE TOBACCO CONTROL BILL AND VISION FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT (VALD)

RESPONSE ON RECOMMENDATION 7.1 OF THE REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON HEALTH ON THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL

“There is no Constitutional Right to smoke and designated smoking areas will not protect the public”

Parliament Health Committee Recommendation:

The bill infringes “on the rights of persons who may wish to smoke regardless of its harmful effect. The Committee therefore recommends provision of designated smoking areas in facilities to afford those who may wish to smoke the opportunity to do so. These smoking areas should have facilities that would ensure that tobacco smoke does not emit to the non-smoking areas.” (7.1, Page 7)

Response against the right to smoke:

Under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the International Convention on Economic and Social Rights and other human rights treaties, and the constitutions of many countries, governments have the responsibility to protect their citizens' right to the highest standard of health, to life, and to a safe work environment. There is no constitutional right to smoke. Secondhand smoke exposure is a known cause of death and disease, and allowing exposure to secondhand smoke infringes on non-smokers' right to health. Public health must take priority. Health is a fundamental human right. The right of a person to breathe clean air takes precedence over any possible right of smokers to pollute the air other people breathe. Smoke-free laws are not about whether smokers smoke; they are about where smokers smoke.

Response against designated smoking areas:

Ventilation systems and designated smoking rooms do not provide effective protection to the public and workers from the deadly effects of secondhand smoke.

The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), the leading association of ventilation professionals, concluded, “the only means of effectively eliminating health risk associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking activity.”

ASHRAE found that no engineering approaches, including current and advanced dilution ventilation and air cleaning technologies, have been demonstrated to control health risks from environmental tobacco smoke exposure in spaces where smoking occurs.

Internal British America Tobacco (BAT) documents reveal that the company knew that air filtration and ventilation systems were ineffective yet still promoted the technology as a viable option to smoking restrictions. According to the documents, BAT's interest in ventilation systems was primarily “to negate the need for indoor smoking bans around the world.”

Key facts – second hand smoke:

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes death, disease, and disability among non-smoking adults and children. Every year, secondhand smoke causes over 600,000 premature deaths worldwide. Adults exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace are at greater risk for developing tobacco-related health problems than adults who work in smoke-free environments. Women and children are disproportionately harmed by secondhand smoke due to their increased exposure from male smokers. Thus, smoke-free laws save lives, protect workers' health and immediately improve public health.

Only 100 Percent Smoke-free Laws Meet The Treaty Requirements.

Smoke-free laws have proven to be popular with the public and easy to implement and enforce. Studies show these laws quickly improve health and do not harm business.

Article 8 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control requires Parties to the treaty to adopt effective smoke-free laws to protect citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke in workplaces, public transport and other indoor public places. Guidelines adopted by the treaty's governing body make it clear that only 100 percent smoke-free laws meet the treaty requirements.

Since 2007, the United Kingdom has been covered by comprehensive smoke-free legislation. As a result, all indoor public places and workplaces are smoke-free with compliance rates as high as 98%.

At least 385 million people are protected by 100% smoke-free laws. These countries, states, and cities are large and small and represent many cultures, climates, and income levels. Countries such as Australia, Canada, Turkey, and Uruguay have successfully passed and implemented 100% smoke-free laws. It is appropriate to protect all people from death and illness caused by secondhand smoke, no matter what country they live in. There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR 100% SMOKE-FREE

"The evidence is clear, there is no safe level of exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke. I urge all countries that have not yet done so to take this immediate and important step to protect the health of all by passing laws requiring all indoor workplaces and public places to be 100% smoke-free."
— Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization (WHO)

Health Committee Contradicts The Objective Of Tobacco Control Measures Of The Public Health Bill

“The Parliamentary Select Committee on Health recommendation for a designated smoking area will only mean encouraging smokers to smoke as against the objectives of the Public Health Bill.

The bill is aim at preventing and reducing the incidence of tobacco related diseases, death and disabilities. Recommendation 7.1 of the report on the Public Health Bill, therefore contradict the objectives of Part Six (Tobacco Control Measures) of the Public Health Bill.

Civil society therefore urges Parliament to reject any recommendation aim at protecting and defending the interest of the tobacco industry. Smokers must be supported and encouraged to quit smoking as stated in the Public Health Bill rather than establishing unreliable room for them to smoke and die. Each life must be preserve for the betterment of the nation. Parliament must defend and protect its integrity against tobacco industry interferences by continuing to protect public health over tobacco profit”.

Issah Ali; Executive Director, Vision for Alternative Development (VALD) and National Coordinator, Coalition on the Tobacco Control Bill.

We urge all Hon. Members of Parliament to support the quick passage of a strong Public Health Bill.

For further Information and clarifications, kindly contact:
The Executive Director



VISION FOR ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT (VALD)

P. O. Box AN 12126 Accra-North Tel: +233-30-2224217

Mobile: +233-24-4057950/3211854 +233-26-4057950/2211854

E-mail: issahwonder@gmail.com, issahali@valdghana.org

Website: www.valdghana.org

World Health Organization. WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic: Implementing smoke-free environments. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2009. American Society of Heating Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE). Environmental tobacco smoke: Position document. Atlanta: ASHRAE, 2005. Leavell NR, Muggli ME, Hurt RD, Repace J. Blowing smoke: British American Tobacco's air filtration scheme. British Medical Journal 2006;332(7535):227-29.