

MMS Testimony In Support of Senate Bill 1175, "An Act Further Regulating Tanning Facilities" And House Bill 2372, "An Act Further Regulating Tanning Facilities"

Before the Joint Committee on Public Health

May 10, 2011

The Massachusetts Medical Society is in support Senate Bill 1175, legislation that would bar persons under the age of 14 years from using tanning devices and establish strict parental consent requirements for 14 - 17 year olds. At present, parental consent is required only for children under the age of 14 years.

Although most Americans understand that getting a tan from the sun is dangerous, tanning is still popular for cosmetic reasons. As a result, indoor tanning has grown as an alternative to exposure to the sun. According to a recent article in the Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology, it is not necessarily a safe alternative. (See: "The Indoor UV Tanning Industry: A Review of Skin Cancer Risk, Health Benefit Claims, and Regulation," 53:6, 1038-1044. J. Levine, M. Sorace, J. Spencer, D. Siegel.) According to article co-author James M. Spencer, M.D., there are immediate risks of sunburns, infections and eye damage during indoor tanning, as well an elevated risk of skin cancer, a disease that kills over 10,000 Americans each year. Indeed, in March 2005, the World Health Organization recommended banning tanning beds for anyone under the age of 18 years; the American Academy of Dermatology and the Massachusetts melanoma Foundation have supported that position.

This legislation would be a major step in the right direction. Not only would it protect minors from injuries and significant cancer risks by limiting their access to tanning facilities, it would also raise the standards for licensure of those facilities and require the registration of tanning operators to assure the safety of those choosing to use indoor tanning facilities.

Despite the identical title, H.2372 would impose far less restrictive standards than S.1175. The Medical Society therefore urges the Committee to report out Senate Bill 1175 favorably, carrying H.2372.