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State Representative Peter Koujouian, Chair
State Representative Susan Fargo, Chair
JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC HEALTH
Room 130
State House
Boston, MA 02133

RE: Bill S1329

Dear Representatives and Members of the Committee:

Without question, Bill S1329 will definitively help prevent the spread of Melanoma and other skin cancers. I can say this emphatically because I know that if Bill S1329 had been in effect when I was a teenager, I would not have been diagnosed with Melanoma at the age of 21.

When I was 14 years old, I was invited to two proms, which took place in early May. Despite shivering on the roof of my house in 50 degree weather trying to get a tan for the proms, I knew that without tanning I would be every teenage girl in the 1990's worst nightmare – pale.

I was an educated 14 year old, however, regarding the dangers of Melanoma. A close friend had lost his mother at a young age to Melanoma. My mother is a nurse and lectured frequently about the dangers of tanning. In my house, tanning was absolutely forbidden. While we were allowed to lay out on the beach and get a tan, going tanning would be akin to getting caught drinking or skipping school. It was not allowed.

My parents made the mistake of trusting my older sisters and I to stay home alone in the 10 days prior to the proms. Taking full advantage of the lack of parental supervision, I forged a note, like the rest of my friends, and signed up for a 5-pack of tanning. I figured I could get away with tanning for a week because I have dark hair and dark eyes and got very tan every summer. Melanoma only happens to red heads, right? I also thought that only going 5 times would not be enough to cause damage. I thought wrong.

Seven years later, in the spring of my junior year in college, in 1996, I went to the doctor before starting my summer as a lifeguard just to check out the moles and to give me peace of mind as I continued to get tan by the pool. I had developed several moles all over my back as a result of my tanning sessions. I was told by the several residents who first checked my skin that I was way too young to have Melanoma. I had an unshakable feeling, however, and requested that they remove one mole in particular. That mole was Melanoma.

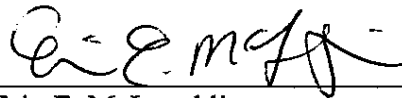
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Granted, I'm Irish, with fair skin, and I grew up on the beach getting tan and was a lifeguard for several years. However, I never had moles until I went tanning; one of those moles resulted in Melanoma, while yet many others were pre-cancerous. I have had 19 moles removed. Worse yet, I will spend the rest of my life under the umbrella at the beach, wearing sunscreen of SPF 50, and to a sun worshipper, there is no harsher sentence.

Had Bill S1329 been in effect when I was a teenager, I would not have been allowed to go tanning, forged note or not. If the Legislature can prevent teenagers from buying cigarettes, why can't it prohibit teenagers from going tanning? Just like smoking and lung cancer, there is also a direct correlation between tanning and skin cancer.

I regret that my schedule has prevented me from testifying in person. If I can be of any service to the Committee in helping to pass this critical Bill, please let me know.

Very truly yours,



Erin E. McLaughlin