

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL

PRESS STATEMENT

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Health Care For All supports the Massachusetts Clean Air bill

(BOSTON) - Health Care For All, the health care consumer advocacy organization, supports the passage of the Clean Air bill being debated today by the Massachusetts House of Representatives and opposes amendments that would weaken the intent to make Massachusetts workplaces smoke-free by 2005.

“The human toll of tobacco is devastating and the financial cost is overwhelming as well,” says John E. McDonough, Executive Director of Health Care for All. “In Massachusetts, we spend approximately \$2.76 billion annually to treat tobacco related illness. Our state Medicaid program spends hundred of millions to treat these illnesses,” he said.

Tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the nation. Secondhand smoke is the third leading preventable cause of death, behind only active smoking and alcohol. Each year, more than 53,000 non-smokers in the country die from breathing secondhand smoke, and in Massachusetts, more than 1,000 people will die.

In 1990, the Environmental Protection Agency classified secondhand smoke as a Class A carcinogen, along with asbestos, radioactive plutonium, and benzene clarifying there is no safe level of exposure.