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March 28, 2017

Hon. Cale P. Keable
Chairman, House Committee on Judiciary
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

**RE: H5522 -- AN ACT RELATING TO HEALTH AND SAFETY - MULTI-UNIT
RESIDENCE SAFETY ACT**

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee:

The American Lung Association of Rhode Island supports H5522 which permits tenants of multi-unit residences to terminate their lease agreements if no action is taken to remedy the presence of secondhand smoke. The American Lung Association believes that all residents in multi-unit housing should be protected from exposure to secondhand smoke.

Secondhand smoke is created by burning tobacco products (including cigarettes, cigars, e-cigarettes and pipes). It is a mixture of smoke given off by the burning end of the tobacco product and the smoke that has been exhaled by the person smoking.ⁱ It contains hundreds of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals, including formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic ammonia and hydrogen cyanide.ⁱⁱ The 2006 U.S. Surgeon General's report on secondhand smoke determined that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.ⁱⁱⁱ

Secondhand smoke can cause serious illness and diseases such as lung cancer, heart disease and stroke. It can also trigger other respiratory problems like asthma.^{iv} Children exposed to secondhand smoke are at an increased risk for sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), acute respiratory infections, ear problems and more severe asthma. Smoking by parents in homes can cause respiratory symptoms and slow lung growth in their children.^v Children who live in multi-unit housing have 45 percent higher cotinine levels than those who live in single-family households.^{vi} Cotinine is a by-product of nicotine in the blood that indicates tobacco use and/or exposure to secondhand smoke.

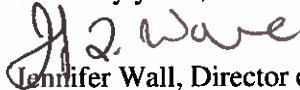
Secondhand smoke can travel through an entire complex including ventilation systems, electrical outlets, cracks in foundation walls, pipes, plumbing and doorways.^{vii} Ventilation systems, including heating and air conditioning, do not remove secondhand smoke. Relocating to another room, opening windows, circulating air with fans, or using air fresheners and candles also does not work in removing secondhand smoke.^{viii}

On November 30, 2016 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) passed a rule that requires all public housing agencies to go smokefree. This rule protects two million Americans, from exposure to secondhand smoke in their homes. This rule is a good start to protecting America's most vulnerable population which includes 760,000 children and more than 300,000 adults over the age of 62. However, this rule does not apply to private multi-unit housing residences and if the property owner is not willing to

enact and enforce a smokefree housing policy, then tenants are forced to live in unhealthy and inadequate living conditions or to suffer the financial consequences of breaking their lease agreements. If tenants do indeed break their lease agreements, it can be difficult to find affordable smokefree housing within a desired area.

Tenants in private multi-unit residences should have the ability to terminate their lease agreements if no action is taken to remedy the presence of secondhand smoke. Tenants should be protected from secondhand smoke and if they are not, they should at the very least, be afforded that right to move elsewhere without financial repercussions. Clean air is something that all Rhode Islanders deserve. The American Lung Association supports H5522.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer Wall, Director of Health Education & Public Policy

American Lung Association in Rhode Island

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [*The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*](#). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. [*The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General*](#). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2006.

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^v Ibid.

^{vi} Wilson KM, Klein JD, Blumkin AK, Gottlieb M, Winickoff JP. [Tobacco Smoke Exposure in Children Who Live in Multiunit Housing. \[PDF–575 KB\]](#) Pediatrics 2011;127(1):85-92

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *How We Can Protect Our Children from Secondhand Smoke, A Parent's Guide*, Atlanta, GA: Office of Smoking and Health, https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/secondhand_smoke/protect_children/pdfs/protect_children_guide.pdf

U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development. *Smokefree Housing: A Toolkit for Residents of Federally Assisted Public and Multi-family Housing*, Washington, DC: Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=pdfresidents.pdf>