



**House Higher Education Committee
House Bill 3124 by Rep. Suleman Lalani
Testimony by Maria Monge, MD, on behalf of:
Texas Medical Association
Texas Pediatric Society
Texas Public Health Coalition
April 10, 2023**

Chair Kuempel, Vice Chair Paul, and committee members, my name is Dr. Maria Monge, and I'm a pediatrician in Austin. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Texas Medical Association, Texas Pediatric Society, and Texas Public Health Coalition *in support* of House Bill 3124, which would require institutions of higher education to prohibit the use of tobacco products on campus.

Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.¹ Smoking causes over 480,000 deaths annually in the United States. An estimated 41,000 of these deaths are due to secondhand smoke exposure.² About 28,000 Texans die from smoking-related illness annually.³ Smoking costs Texans \$10.29 billion in annual health care costs and \$24.4 billion in productivity losses.⁴

Smoking also causes many diseases, including cancer and heart disease.⁵ Smokers have a higher risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease due to the harmful effects of smoking on the brain.⁶ Secondhand smoke exposure also causes health problems, including stroke and lung cancer. Research shows cigarette and e-cigarette users had twice as much DNA damage to cells in the mouth compared to non-smokers, which increases the risk of chronic disease.⁷

TMA, TPS, and TPHC support HB 3124. About 99% of adult smokers start smoking before age 26. Smoke-free policies protect nonsmokers from secondhand smoke exposure, help prevent

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & Tobacco Use Fact Facts and Fact Sheets. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/index.htm#:~:text=Cigarette%20smoking%20remains%20the%20leading,death%20in%20the%20United%20States.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tobacco-Related Mortality. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality/index.htm

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Extinguishing the Tobacco Epidemic in Texas. <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/stateandcommunity/state-fact-sheets/texas/index.html>

⁴ Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Texas. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/texas>

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Smoking & Tobacco Use Diseases and Death. https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/diseases-and-death.html

⁶ Smoking harms the brain, raises dementia risk – but not if you quit. <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2021/07/06/smoking-harms-the-brain-raises-dementia-risk-but-not-if-you-quit>

⁷ DNA damage levels similar in vapers and smokers, study finds. <https://keck.usc.edu/dna-damage-levels-similar-in-vapers-and-smokers-study-finds/>

young adults from taking up smoking, and increase smoking cessation efforts. This will result in fewer lives lost to preventable disease, and fewer dollars spent on preventable health care costs and lost productivity.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments in support of HB 3124. I would be happy to answer any questions.