

REP. SWANGER AND ADVOCATES CALL FOR PASSAGE OF HB 369

By Jason Gottesman

After this morning's House Judiciary Committee hearing on the same subject, Rep. RoseMarie Swanger (R-Lebanon) was joined by a group of anti-skin cancer advocates to call for the passage of [HB 369](#), which would ban minors under the age of 18 from using tanning beds. Rep. Swanger noted a study indicating a 74 percent higher melanoma rate for those who use tanning beds. She said sporting such a tan has been equated with being healthy, but is no longer acceptable. Rep. Swanger said tanning beds circumvent a day at the beach by effectively replicating the sun's harmful rays. She also said this method of tanning is just as, if not more harmful than tanning in natural sunlight.

Sharon Swanger, Rep. Swanger's sister-in-law, discussed how she was diagnosed with melanoma from tanning in natural sunlight. She discussed the treatment of her cancer and said state can better regulate teens using tanning beds. She said parental consent is not enough regulation in this area because not everybody has an appreciation for the dangers involved. She pointed out the total cost of her medical care has been \$860,000 and she also discussed a pending vote in the California state legislature banning minors from using tanning beds. Swanger stated banning minors from using tanning beds is a natural extension of not allowing minors to buy cigarettes.

Renee Folk, a melanoma cancer survivor, noted she was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 28 and is now a four-year cancer survivor. She detailed how she began tanning at 16 and was given no warning of the dangers and was not required to have parental consent. Folk discussed the last effects of her cancer and said she will likely have cancer again. She noted the most tragic part about her cancer diagnosis was that it was self inflicted.

Amy Silvis, another melanoma cancer survivor, noted she has been in remission for about a year and, in the past, did not care about the health of her skin. She noted due to sun and tanning bed exposure, she had a mole change shape and color, which ended up with her being diagnosed with stage-three melanoma. Silvis described her cancer treatments and said nothing good can come from tanning beds and said the benefits of a tan do not outweigh the associated risks, especially since she believes minors are under-informed about the pertinent risks.

Kaitlynn Kline, Miss Laurel Highlands' Outstanding Teen 2011, stated her platform of melanoma awareness stems from her cousin being diagnosed with the disease. She said it is her mission to promote proper protection so as to prevent skin cancer and indicated she educates teens and tells them one does not need a perfect glow to look healthy. Kline said teens do not have the proper knowledge to make the best decision as to whether to tan and concluded by saying "melanoma will kill you."

Dr. Gavin Robertson and Dr. Rogerio Izar Neves from the Penn State Hershey Medical Center spoke in favor of the bill. Robertson noted the bill needs to be regulated due to the damage done to teens from tanning beds. Neves indicated the doctors support the bill because they know what damage tanning beds can do to minors. Neves noted melanoma is the number one cancer death of young girls and artificial tanning puts them at a higher risk. He also noted the addictive nature of tanning beds and indicated the damage from tanning beds will be seen for years to come.

Diane Phillips of the American Cancer Society noted her organization's support of HB 369 is based on scientific evidence. She noted melanoma is the most common cancer in the United States and exposure to Ultraviolet rays during adolescence increases one's risk of getting the disease. Phillips said there are many reports detailing the negative effects of the tanning beds and said the American Cancer Society supports initiatives to decrease the exposure of minors, increase regulation and enforcement, and increase education regarding the negative effects of tanning beds.

Rep. Swanger noted the support of the American Pediatric Society for the bill and said she will soon be talking to House Judiciary Chairman Ron Marsico (R-Dauphin) about bringing the bill up for a vote in committee.