December 19, 2017

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chair, Senate Cancer Coalition
U.S. Senate
131 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chair, Senate Cancer Coalition
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Isakson, Senator Feinstein, and Members of the Senate Cancer Coalition:

On behalf of the American Academy of Dermatology Association (Academy), which represents more than 13,500 dermatologists nationwide, thank you for championing policies that not only seek to find a cure for cancer, but that seek to promote cancer prevention as well. As such, I write to ask you to oppose any efforts to repeal the excise tax on indoor tanning services, including the Tanning Tax Repeal Act of 2017 (H.R. 1150) or any effort that would seek to include such provisions in any other legislative package, including, but not limited to, efforts to extend expiring Medicare provisions, measures to address certain health-related tax measures, or in any appropriations-related legislation.

Dermatologists diagnose and treat more than 3,000 different skin diseases, including skin cancer, and dermatologists have made it a priority to advance public policies that promote prevention and education about skin cancer and the dangers of indoor tanning. The United States Department of Health and Human Services and the World Health Organization’s International Agency of Research on Cancer panel have declared ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun and artificial sources, such as tanning beds and sun lamps, to be a known carcinogen (cancer-causing substance).\(^1\) Evidence from multiple studies has shown that exposure to UV radiation from indoor tanning devices is associated with an increased risk of melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer, including squamous cell carcinoma and basal cell carcinoma.\(^2\) Researchers estimate that indoor tanning may cause upwards of 400,000 cases of skin cancer in the U.S. each year.\(^3\)

Skin cancer is preventable, but the greatest barrier to avoiding the dangers of indoor tanning is awareness. Even in states that limit access for children, the laws are not consistently known by consumers, nor are they

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\(^3\) Wehner MR, Shive ML, Chren MM, Han J, Qureshi AA, Linos E. "Indoor tanning and non-melanoma skin cancer: systematic review and meta-analysis.” BMJ. 2012 Oct 2;345:e5909
followed by operators. According to a recent study in the Journal of the American Medical Association, more than one-third of indoor tanning salons do not abide by state laws limiting use by children and teens. ⁴

By helping to raise awareness of the dangers of indoor tanning, the tax can serve as a deterrent to help mitigate the risks associated with indoor tanning, which are often not shared with customers of indoor tanning facilities. The indoor tanning industry has been repeatedly cited by the Federal Trade Commission for misleading advertising. ⁵ For example, American Suntanning Association spokesman Chris Sternberg said to the Wall Street Journal when referring to repealing the tax, “...it’ll give consumers permission to tan again.” ⁶

Current estimates indicate more than $6 billion is spent annually on melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer treatment. Should the tax on indoor tanning be repealed, it would not only remove a deterrent to indoor tanning, but it could also lead to an increase in the cost of skin cancer treatment to the overall healthcare system. Furthermore, according to the Joint Tax Commission June 26, 2017 report to the Senate Committee on the Budget, repealing the tax could cost the American taxpayers upwards of $605 million in missed revenue, a funding source that could be used to offset potential deficits or to fund other health care priorities.

The Academy looks forward to continuing to work with the Senate Cancer Coalition on maintaining and promoting strong cancer prevention measures in public policy. Should you have any questions or if the Academy can be of assistance in any way, please do not hesitate to contact Blake McDonald, the Academy’s Manager of Congressional Affairs, at bmcdonald@aad.org or 202.712.2608.

Sincerely,

Henry W. Lim, MD, FAAD
President, American Academy of Dermatology Association

⁴ Melissa S. Williams, MD; Brittany Buhalog, MD; Laura Blumenthal, MD; et al, “Tanning Salon Compliance Rates in States With Legislation to Protect Youth Access to UV Tanning,” JAMA Dermatology, October 25, 2017. doi:10.1001/jamadermatol.2017.3736