



April 2, 2025

Dear Members of the Wisconsin State Legislature,

We are writing to express opposition to LRB 0951/1 relating to: exempting tobacco bars from the public smoking ban and ask that you do not sign on as a co-sponsor.

This bill would create a loophole and weaken Wisconsin’s smokefree air law by allowing smoking of cigars, brown cigarettes, and pipe tobacco in so-called “tobacco bars.” It undermines Wisconsin’s popular smokefree air law which, as currently applied, is broadly popular, with 77.5% of Wisconsinites supporting the current law, 18.3% neither support nor oppose, and only 4.2% oppose the clean indoor air law.ⁱ

Current law defines a tobacco bar as a tavern that generates 15 percent or more of its annual gross income from the sale of cigars, brown cigarettes, and pipe tobacco. This includes cigarettes wrapped in brown paper, which are classified (and taxed) as a cigar in Wisconsin. These brown cigarettes, known as “little cigars”, are identical in size and shape to cigarettes, are sold in cigarette-like packs of 20, and have a filter like a cigarette. The only difference is they are wrapped in brown paper instead of white paper.



In addition to the brown cigarette loophole and the loophole this creates in clean indoor air protections, Wisconsin would need to create new procedures to track the location and revenue of tobacco bars. This would be logistically difficult, expensive for taxpayers, and could create new red tape for all taverns. The proposed change complicates the law and would require training for law enforcement.

This bill isn’t a narrow cigar bar bill as it might first seem. It is a tobacco bar bill, as the bill states, allowing use of a wide array of addictive products.

We urge you to oppose this legislation and ask that you do not sign on as a cosponsor.

Thank you for your consideration,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
American Heart Association
American Lung Association
Americans for Nonsmokers’ Rights
Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging and Health Groups
Emplify Health

UW Health
UW School of Medicine and Public Health
Wisconsin Association of Local Health Departments and Boards
Wisconsin Allergy Society
Wisconsin Medical Society
Wisconsin Public Health Association
Wisconsin Primary Healthcare Association
Wisconsin Society for Respiratory Care

For additional information, please reach out to:

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ⁱ Wisconsin Tobacco Facts: Adults. February 2023. https://www.cuph.org/uploads/2/5/8/5/25855930/tobacco_facts_adults_2023_february_1_.pdf