25th November, 2005

Dr Hon KWOK Ka-ki
Chairman
Legislative Panel on Health Services
Legislative Council

Dear Mr. Kwok

Proposed Amendments to Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance

We are a group of third year medical students at the University of Hong Kong writing to express our concern over the known hazard of second-hand smoke which has been, and continues to be such a menacing threat to the lives of our citizens. While it is encouraging to note the gradual but significant progress regarding legislation restricting the sales of tobacco, there is still much to be done, laws to be made and enforced to protect the rights of the unwilling recipients of second-hand smoke. At present, non-smokers are still being forced to inhale second-hand smoke which is proved to have much toxic effects on health comparable to that of active smoking. The figure "1,324", probably the most widely publicized number in Hong Kong for the past month, represents the deaths it is responsible for each year. Another colossal figure of 5.3 billion, measured in monetary units, shows the amount of money spent, or more accurately put, wasted each year in countering the damage caused by the deleterious health effects of smoking. Both figures illustrate this staggering situation which demands our efforts and prompt actions.

On 18th November, 2005, our group of nine collected signatures from the pedestrians at Central, aiming to reflect public concern on this pressing issue. Our target was reached in just over two hours, much earlier than expected. These requests for support were received with enthusiasm, with so many, after signing their name, expressed to us their deep concern and determination to bring about the banning of smoking in all public premises, especially in dining places where they definitely prefer nutrition to poison. There was also a lady, a waitress from a nearby restaurant who expressed her worries and fear with such helplessness that we started to wonder why nothing has been done so far to alleviate her threat. As demonstrated by numerous surveys, past and present, there has been consistent and overwhelming support to ban smoking in restaurants which serve as both dining premises and

workplaces. We are confident that these voices we heard on the streets precisely confirm the allegiance of the general public.

In support of the smoke-free policy in restaurants, we have also set up a website to provide more detailed description about our action plans and results obtained. Please feel free to visit it for more information: http://www.geocities.com/smokefree1324/

We recall with much admiration that the legislation to ban malachite green in all foodstuffs was passed within a matter of days once this harmful chemical was found in various samples of fish. We are now calling for such efficiency in a matter that deserves far more attention in terms of the scale and seriousness of its detrimental effects. We trust that you, being responsible and responsive legislators, will take this matter with comparable urgency and vote in favour of the proposed amendments to the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance. The people of Hong Kong are relying on you to protect them from becoming one of the next 1,324 victims of second-hand smoke.

Thank you very much, we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeannie Chik

Dominic Chan

Johnson Chu

KiKi Fong

Martin Lam

Wesley Leung

Joe Ngo

Amy Wong

Henry Jeffrey Yuen

MBBS Year III

Factulty of Medicine

University of Hong Kong

Email: jchik@hkusua.hku.hk

Enclosed: Signatures we have collected in Central on 18th November, 2005

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