

To: Panel on Health Services of the Legislative Council

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Re: Support to Strengthen Tobacco Control Measures

Cigarette smoking causes millions of premature deaths and tremendous financial loss each year. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about six million people killed by tobacco each year, with five million directly related to tobacco, while one tenth of them are non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

Of the measures in fighting against tobacco use, pictorial health warnings on cigarette pack area can significantly raise the awareness of harms of cigarettes and have effects in stopping youths from starting smoking and encouraging smokers to quit. Larger pictorial warnings are significantly more effective than smaller, text-only messages. Significant proportion of adults and youth smokers report that large text and pictorial health warnings have reduced their consumption levels, increased their likelihood of quitting, increased their motivation to quit and increased the likelihood of remaining abstinent following a quit attempt.

Despite failures in approving the increase of warning sizes in some countries, such as India, 16 countries have successfully increased warnings signs to cover more than 60% of the overall package space, for example, Thailand approved new regulations requiring larger graphic health warnings to cover 85% of both sides of cigarette package in June 2014; Australia and Nepal increased the warnings signs covering 75% of the front surface and 90% of the back surface (82.5% in average); Canada requires covering 75% of front and back pack area; New Zealand and Sri Lanka require 60% of the package space to be appropriated to health warnings. It is desirable for Hong Kong to increase the warning sizes to control tobacco use more effectively, preventing the youth from starting smoking and encouraging current users to quit.

All warnings are subject to 'wear-out' over time, although larger pictorial warnings sustain their effects longer. Besides increasing the size of warning signs on the packages, it is also important to maintain the effect by introducing new warning signs and messages regularly, e.g. follow the WHO's Guidelines recommend to establish more sets of health warnings and messages and alternate after a specified period. Thus twelve or even more warning signs, especially larger

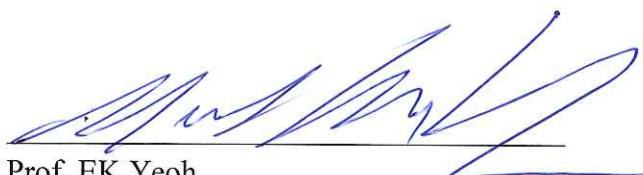
pictorial signs are warranted in Hong Kong, and they can alternate after a specified period to maintain the effect. Besides, monitoring its effectiveness, e.g. through smoking rates and number of smokers who choose to quit, after the proposal is taken effect is helpful.

Second-hand smoking is similar to active smoking in causing significant health harms, which include but not limit to cancers, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, and perinatal and postnatal complications. Many countries or areas, such as Australia, Singapore, New Zealand, the United Kingdom (UK), have established legislation to ban smoking in public spaces, e.g. bus interchanges and shelters, taxi ranks. Singapore has banned smoking at bus interchanges & shelters, within 5 metres radius of bus shelters, as well as ferry terminals & piers, and areas occupied by a queue of two or more persons in a public place. In a city of Canada, smoking is banned within three metres of all bus shelters. Thus regarding the right of not smoking, and the complaints and suggestions received by the Tobacco Control Office (TCO) in recent years at the tunnels by the public, COSH proposed 8 tunnel portal areas are proposed to be no smoking areas (NSAs). The measure is thought to taken into considerations comments and remarks from public to protect people from second-hand smoking. Additionally, more bus stops and shelters in open areas are encouraged to be considered as no smoking areas.

In light of the above and facts of health effects by tobacco use, we support the proposal of:

- (i) Enlarging the size of pictorial health warnings to at least 85% of the cigarette pack area and increasing the number of forms of health warning to twelve or more;
- (ii) Smoking ban at eight bus interchanges located within tunnel portal areas; and

Additionally, we recommend (i) monitoring of the effect of larger size warning pictures, and consider design more sets of larger size warning pictures; include more no smoking areas such as bus stops and shelters, within 3-5 metres radius of bus shelters, and taxi ranks in the open areas; and (ii) doing further research and relevant studies on e-cigarettes in and out of Hong Kong to inform policy on regulatory studies.



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