



## **NEWS RELEASE**

### **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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#### **State's largest city passes smoking ordinance**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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The Birmingham City Council has taken a major step to improve the health of its citizens. Beginning June 1, public places including restaurants in the Birmingham city limits will be smoke free. Excluded from the ordinance are bars and lounges that are unattached to dining facilities.

State Health Officer Dr. Donald Williamson says, "This is one of the most comprehensive clean indoor air ordinances in the state. We congratulate the Birmingham City Council for its effort to protect the health of patrons and employees by eliminating the exposure to secondhand smoke. Birmingham is setting a fine example for other municipalities to follow."

Approximately 25 percent of Alabamians identify themselves as smokers. Treating their smoking-related diseases costs Alabama \$1.7 billion each year in direct medical expenses. Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death with more than 7,400 Alabamians dying annually from smoking-attributable causes.

While some business owners initially fear a loss of revenue with the new ordinance a Harvard School of Public Health study shows otherwise. The study, released this month, shows that comprehensive smoke-free laws in Massachusetts did not affect sales or employment in the state's restaurants, bars and nightclubs. The study compared revenue data from a previous year to this year's data and found no statistically significant changes in revenue.

Help is available for those who want to quit using tobacco. The Alabama Department of Public Health recently launched the Alabama Tobacco Quitline offering free counseling services to tobacco users. For more information call 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669).

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