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M RAPID CITY MEDICAL CENTER, LLP
2820 MT. RUSHMORE ROAD • PO BOX 6020
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA 57709-6020
PHONE 605-342-3280 • FAX 605-342-6945

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To whom it may concern

As a physician, practicing Internal Medicine in the Rapid City area for over 14 years, and campaigning for Smoke free laws along with organizations, including the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association, I was disappointed to learn about the openings of several hookah lounges throughout our community.

Several months ago, I cared for a young man in his early twenty's socializing at a local hookah lounge when he became nauseated, dizzy then passed out while inhaling tobacco from a hookah pipe. EMS was activated and the patient was transported to Regional Hospital ER where an expensive (and probably unnecessary) medical work up ensued. He was instructed followed up with me after all of the testing turned up negative. My advice to him in our 30 minutes together....."No more tobacco smoke, in any form" and I informed him that the idea that using hookah is a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes is completely false.

Hookah users typically spend 45 minutes to an hour socializing; they take longer pulls that are held for a longer duration, all of which leads to increased exposure to the carcinogenic smoke and high levels of nicotine.

Because of these factors, research has shown that, in one sitting, hookah users may inhale the equivalent of 100 cigarettes.

Hookah bars are popping up all over the country targeting, mostly young adults. We must stop this growing trend that poses a threat to not only young patrons but staff who are forced to breathe secondhand smoke in the workplace.

Our state needs to recognize hookah secondhand smoke poses the same dangers as smoke from cigarettes. Allowing these types of businesses to circumvent our smoke-free laws is a real setback to public health and our lawmakers need to step up and remove loopholes in the law that allow these establishments to take residence in our communities.

Sincerely

Kevin J. Weiland, MD FACP

FAMILY MEDICINE WESTSIDE
3810 JACKSON BOULEVARD
RAPID CITY, SD 57702
605-343-4050
FAX: 605-348-2903

FAMILY MEDICINE MID-TOWN
2006 MT. RUSHMORE RD.
RAPID CITY, SD 57701
605-348-2273
FAX: 605-348-3529

EMERGICLINIC
2201 JACKSON BLVD., STE 102
RAPID CITY, SD 57702
605-348-4645
FAX: 605-348-5501

HOT SPRINGS CLINIC
130 N. 15TH STREET
HOT SPRINGS, SD 57747
605-745-5736
FAX: 605-745-6523

BLACK HILLS UROLOGY
710 ST. ANNE ST.
RAPID CITY, SD 57701
605-348-4100
FAX: 605-348-0662