There is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure

Dear Editor:

In 2012, Indiana passed its first statewide smokefree air law — restricting smoking in most public places; however, this law still leaves many workers unprotected from the dangers of secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke is the third leading cause of preventable death in the country, and has been proven to cause cancer, heart disease, stroke, emphysema and asthma. Secondhand smoke contains more than 70 carcinogens and thousands of chemicals, irritants and toxins. Research consistently tells us that there is no safe level of secondhand smoke exposure.

The Indiana Cancer Consortium’s District 6 Cancer Control Coalition supports comprehensive smokefree air policies as a way to reduce the burden of cancer and protect all workers equally from the dangers of secondhand smoke. Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke have been shown to cause increased risk for lung, colorectal, and other cancers. In Howard County, during 2008 to 2012, approximately 398 people were diagnosed with lung cancer alone. Sadly, most of these cancers could have been avoided by eliminating cigarette smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke.

A comprehensive smokefree air policy would allow everyone in Kokomo and Howard County to work in a safe, smokefree environment. No employee should have to choose between their health and their paycheck. State and local governments have a responsibility to protect the health of their citizens. A comprehensive smokefree air law for the city of Kokomo and Howard County will do just that.

Sincerely,

ICC District 6 Cancer Coalition