



Interreligious Eco-Justice Network

March 2, 2009

Dear Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and Members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Kiener. I am the director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network and its Healthy People/Healthy Planet campaign to reduce our exposure to toxins from common household materials. Over 500 allied congregations in Connecticut are part of our network. I am here to testify in support of HB 6572 & SB 919. These bills are a solid step toward the management and regulation two known toxins, Bisphenol-A, and Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers.

Everyone here today and all the people affected by these bills - all the manufacturers of BPA and brominated flame retardants, all the companies which use BPA and PBDEs in their products and packaging, and all the consumers who use these products, are awash in a sea of materials from modern chemistry. These exposures combine and influence us in unknown ways over the course of a lifetime. Our current system of government oversight is not up to the task of preventing harm from BPA, PBDEs, and other materials. Many of these materials, BPA and PBDEs among them, demonstrate harm to lab animals at clinically relevant levels; that is to say, at levels very much in line with our human exposure. BPA exposure in lab animals results in an increase in the so-called "diseases of civilization" that are more and more prevalent in the human community. Shockingly, diabetes, cancer, obesity and even mental impairment occur at higher rates in exposed animal populations and are certainly on the rise in this room. My heart sank when I first came across this datum, as I myself am a breast cancer survivor with no genetic predisposition to the disease.

I think the bills before us are a responsible first step in protecting the most vulnerable citizens - our children, who are physiologically less well equipped to process these chemicals of concern in any amount. Exposing kids to harmful materials at a vulnerable age is folly when it results in an increased incidence of life-long diseases. An ounce of prevention is surely worth a pound of cure.

I hope that this bill will pass and that it will be the harbinger of a wave of improved legislative oversight of our chemical exposures and a new green chemistry economy. I urge you to support the passage of these bills without amendments because they are supportive of human health and life, including our own.

Sincerely,
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