

Written testimony of Mary Lu M. Hickman, M.D.

Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

March 2, 2009

Testimony in support of:

HB 6572 and SB 919

As a retired physician and medical consultant in health policy, I wish to express my strong support for enactment of HB 6573 and SB 919 to limit the use of environmental toxins in foods, beverages and their plastic containers. Such action would assist in reducing the alarming increase in childhood disabilities and adult obesity and endocrine disturbances now being seen.

While we know that genetic predisposition influences many diseases, Dr. Eric Kandell of Columbia University, a Nobel Prize winner in medicine, reminds us that genes are not the ultimate controller of behavior, we now know that environment can alter the expression of genes and thereby modify the anatomical structure of the brain.

Current peer reviewed studies document that common chemicals impact health at lower levels than previously believed. Testing confirms that over 90 percent of the population carries BPA in their bodies. Timing of exposure is critical. Prenatally, the fetus is unable to metabolize BPA and thus develops toxic high levels that influence brain and body development. Young children and adolescents also have critical windows of development when they are most vulnerable.

In my years as a medical practitioner, I have become acutely aware of the increased incidence of severely disturbed children – children with autism and attention deficit disorders. In my capacity as medical consultant to the California Department of Developmental Services, I was privileged to be involved in research studies with state universities, Stanford, and private medical care programs. Our data base of individuals with developmental disabilities maintained since the 1980s is one of the largest and most accurate available in the United States.

Using this data base, studies from the M.I.N.D. Institute at the University of California, Davis published in January 2009 in *Epidemiology* confirmed that the incidence of autism rose 7-to 8-fold in CA from the early 1990s to the present. These increasing trends were observed for all races, all categories of mother's or father's ages, both sexes, and all educational levels of parents. Currently, the Institute is continuing it's major study on gene-environment interactions.

Based on all the studies confirming the deleterious effects of environmental toxins such as BPA and PBDEs and the documented rise of environmentally caused defects in growth and metabolism, it is critically important to support passage of HB 6572 and SB 919.

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