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State Representative Lonnie Reed

Testimony on behalf of HB 5126 and HB 5130

Environment Committee Public Hearing 3/1/10

As we all know, the green chemistry movement is growing and major efforts are underway here in the US and abroad to restrict or eliminate the use of suspect chemicals in all kinds of products, replacing them with safe alternatives.

I am testifying today in support of HB 5126, an Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at UConn Health Center. It is an idea whose time has come. The Institute would be pro-active rather than re-active, bringing stakeholders to the table, enabling scientists, health professionals, industry representatives and regulators to work together in an ongoing effort to anticipate Chemical Policy initiatives from the European Union and a growing number of states including California, Washington State, Michigan, Minnesota and Maine.

The Institute could help companies track regulatory trends and make sense of new requirements; it could assist in the training of occupational health, safety and environmental staff, and in the dissemination of best practices for chemical management. Connecticut companies must develop programs to respond to these new market requirements. A Chemical Innovations Institute could be a very attractive new resource for protecting the jobs and the health of Connecticut residents.

As a business person myself who works constantly to anticipate and respond to trends, I know it is suicidal to just sit back and do nothing as markets close their doors to your products. A Chemical Innovations Institute would be good for the health of consumers. Good for the fiscal health of manufacturers and for the thousands of people who work for them.

SERVING BRANFORD

I am also speaking today in favor HB 5130, An Act Concerning Child Safe Products. Again, parents the world-over are growing more militant when it comes to the composition of toys, food containers, jewelry and other products that inevitably wind up in their children's mouths. As we all know, that's what kids do.

The goal of this bill is to make sure that the most toxic chemicals do not end up in products meant for children. Companies eager to sell their products to increasingly savvy consumers, and in increasingly regulated overseas markets, will benefit from phasing out chemicals that are on the hit list. Manufacturers that innovate and respond to consumer concerns will outcompete those that do not. Since Maine, Washington state and Minnesota are moving forward with very similar approaches, Connecticut has the opportunity to adopt the lists of chemicals being developed by these states.

The "one-chemical-at-a-time" policy will not solve our big picture problem anytime soon. Again, HB 5130 is an opportunity to be pro-active rather than reactive. And that is good for babies and good for business as well.

Thank you for allowing me to testify.