

**Written Testimony of Laura Anderson of Wethersfield, CT,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee, March 1, 2010.**

Testimony in Support of:

House Bill 5126, An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut

House Bill 5130, An Act Concerning Child Safe Products

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

My name is Laura Anderson.

I am in writing because I strongly support HB 5126 An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut and HB 5130 An Act Concerning Child Safe Products.

In 2007 I agreed to participate as a volunteer in a biomonitoring project called "Is It In Us?" (IsItInUs.org). For this project, I donated samples of my blood and urine to be tested for the presence of 3 chemicals. I had learned from reading and from a friend in public health that our current lifestyles expose us to chemicals that have been associated with many growing health problems. I wanted to learn more about these chemicals and learn if I had them in my own body. I especially wanted to learn this information to protect my daughters and family, and help make the public aware of these unknown hazards. I knew that, like myself, in general, other people don't know about the toxic chemicals they are exposed to every day in their own environments and the extent of burden they carry as a result.

The results indicated that, like 95% of the U.S. population, I carried bisphenol-A, phthalates, and PBDE's in my body. The most important lesson for me from this experience was that toxic chemical exposure is not necessarily from our neighborhood factories or industrial parks. Much of our exposure to these chemicals is in our own homes, cars and workplaces. Bisphenol-A is used to make certain plastics used for things like food containers and water bottles. It is also used in the epoxy liner of food cans. The chemical leaches into the liquid or food. Phthalates are also widely used in food containers and plastics, and in personal care products (lotions, nail polish, etc.). PBDE's are chemicals that act as flame retardants and are used in the manufacture of all kinds of items in our homes. For example, furniture upholstery, rugs, fabric or curtains, electronics, mattresses are made with PBDE's.

As I reflected on these results, I began to think back to some experiences I have had that I suspect are related to chemical exposure since these chemicals are associated with cancers, infertility and reproductive problems, learning disabilities to name just a few. First, I have known a handful of families who have had a child treated for cancer. I don't remember any child in my community when I was young who died of cancer. I have known several women who have died of breast or ovarian cancer. I struggled with infertility for several years, yet both my mother and grandmother had several children.

Before having children, I worked as a school psychologist in different elementary schools and came across many children afflicted with attentional issues, learning disabilities and autism. I thought back to my own experience as an elementary student. I don't remember anyone with anything like autism in my classrooms, neighborhood, church or community. When I think about the fact that today's newborn is born with over 200 chemicals in their cord blood, it all seems to fit together.

Since the 1970's, thousands of chemicals have been released into the marketplace, in fact, more than 80,000. Our toxic chemical policies are so weak that we require little or no evidence for a chemical's safety before allowing its use. This is irresponsible. As we begin to understand the consequences of using unsafe chemicals, we are realizing the cost of our policies in terms of health problems and health care costs.

I used to think that my efforts to keep my family from harm were mostly effective. However, now I'm not so sure. I wonder if that water from the plastic filter in my refrigerator is tainted. I worry about my daughter's Ipods and Nintendo DS's and I remind them to wash their hands after using them. I hope that the polyester shower curtain which replaced the vinyl shower curtain is not emitting anything harmful. I don't buy canned food anymore, but I don't know what we're getting when we eat out. I store most food items in glass containers. I never cook with plastic, even the frozen vegetables to be steamed in their plastic packages in the microwave. We buy special nail polish now and try to find personal care products without fragrance and chemicals we know are harmful. I just look at my furniture and rugs sometimes, wondering. I try not to think about our mattresses. As my friend says, "Laura, you can't buy your way out of this one." Boy is she right. But why should we have to wonder if our everyday products are safe? The bottom line is, we need our legislators to better regulate chemicals to protect our children and ourselves.

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for their leadership in this area. Please make passing **HB5126** and **HB 5130** a priority this legislative session.

Sincerely,

Laura Anderson
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