

**Written Testimony of Martha Kelly of 57 Curtiss Street, Hartford, and
Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice
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 honorable members of the Environment Committee,

My name is Martha Kelly and I am a member of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice, a group that works to protect the health of some of the most vulnerable populations, the urban residents, the poor, and people of color.

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.

I am concerned about this issue of because I am aware that the Federal system of regulation of chemicals was weakened from its inception so that it can not do an adequate job of protecting the public. Materials that cause us concern are ubiquitous in our lives through products in our every day lives. Most of the substances used in trade have not been tested for their effect on health and few steps have been taken to bar the presence of those that are widely recognized as harmful.

It is instructive that we have had to take legislative action in recent years to ban lead and asbestos in children's products and that we are here this year asking that you see that cadmium is phased out.

As a woman and as a grandmother of two girls, I am concerned about evidence that many of the chemicals in use act on the hormonal system of living beings in ways that we are only beginning to understand. One sign of this is the fact that girls are reaching puberty earlier than in the past. That change exposes them to increasing risk of breast cancer. I recommend that you all take a look at publications of the Breast Cancer Fund: www.breastcancerfund.org/evidence. The intergenerational impact of the class of materials identified as "endocrine disruptors" is especially frightening. Many other health problems, from reproductive disorders to the epidemic of obesity and type 2 diabetes may be linked to such substances.

As an activist, I am concerned that the mortality of breast cancer is higher among women of color and that aggressive tumors have appeared in astonishingly young women. Research work on this subject has been done at The Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute.

Occupational exposures are among the sources of exposure that concern me. Ironically, chemotherapy nurses are among the populations who have an increased risk of breast cancer. For more information on such issues the newsletters of CEO are of great value: <http://www.upci.upmc.edu/ceo/newsletters.cfm>

I urge you to adopt both of these bills because they will begin to move us beyond the need to come to you about chemicals one at a time. A more comprehensive approach is needed. When parents do all they can to provide their children with healthy environments, it still is not enough. They need the help of regulators. Parents should not have to wonder whether common household products like bedding, toys or food can linings are damaging their children's futures.

Body Burden's of toxic chemicals concern me. Infants' cord blood has been found to contain more than 200 toxic chemicals (many of them no longer in use such as PCBs) when studied by the Environmental Working Group. This points to the urgency of these bills. The materials of highest concern are those that persist in the environment long after they are discarded or disposed of.
<http://www.ewg.org/reports/bodyburden2/execsumm.php>

A Chemical Innovations Institute, as established in HB 5126, would help Connecticut to lead in manufacturing products that families can trust. It is an economic development opportunity for green jobs growth and will assure that CT products can be sold in the international market place. This will help our state businesses and the CT economy as a whole, as well as protecting the workers and consumers who I mentioned earlier in my testimony.

The European Union is in the process of phasing out hundreds of chemicals of high concern as part of their REACH legislation. Many countries are following the lead of the EU, including China, and U.S. manufacturers will have to find and use safer alternatives in order to stay competitive in the world market.

Without protections such as these bills begin to afford us, Connecticut will remain a dumping ground for dirtier products, even as safer ones are manufactured for sale in Europe and China.

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.

Thank you,

Martha Kelly
57 Curtiss Street
Hartford, CT 06106