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Testimony of Phil Sherwood, Deputy Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG), Before the Environment Committee, Testimony in Support of: HB 5126 and HB 5130, March 1, 2010

My name is Phil Sherwood and I am the Deputy Director of the Connecticut Citizen Action Group (CCAG). CCAG is a membership based organization comprised of 25,000 members statewide and has been active in Connecticut for nearly 40 years.

We would like to thank the members of the Environment Committee for having this hearing and would like to express organizational support for HB 5126 and HB 5130.

The Chemical lobby may say it is best to employ a wait and see approach in Connecticut and claim that the federal reform for the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) is near. Unfortunately, they're wrong. The wait and see argument is simply a delaying tactic to thwart efforts of state elected officials to proactively consider phasing out chemicals of concern. Legislation to reform the TSCA has not even been introduced at the federal level, and the chemical lobby has made a similar argument to delay action there. In D.C., the chemical lobby has argued that federal reform should wait to see what happens at the state level given that various states are considering comprehensive initiatives to deal with toxins.

Ideally, reform happens at the federal level. However, we've seen for some time that states such as Connecticut pave the way for meaningful reform at the federal level such as when Connecticut took legislative action on lead, asbestos, and BPA in 2008 and 2009. Connecticut has a real opportunity to lead by example once again.

HB 5130, "An Act Concerning Child Safe Products" would help make sure that toxic chemicals do not end up in products meant for children. While many of us probably hope that all the products we use daily are safe, children's products that contain chemicals of concern need to be addressed. Chemicals such as cadmium, arsenic, and unnecessary flame retardants could be prioritized for phase-out based on their health hazards. This approach better ensures that we no longer have to do battle with one chemical at a time.

Cadmium, for example, is being found in children's jewelry and PVC plastic toys. This toxic metal can harm child development, disrupt hormone systems, alter behavior, and delay the development of motor and sensory skills. My wife and I are parents of a 1 month old baby girl and should not have to worry if the rattle she will no doubt put in her mouth contains cadmium.

HB 5126, "An Act Establishing a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut" would foster green job growth and reduce the use of toxic chemicals that are increasingly linked to the rising incidence of numerous chronic diseases.

The concept of the institute would allow CT to complement work being done in our neighboring states. CT needs to act in the area of safer, green chemical alternatives in order to keep CT businesses up to date on international and national chemical policy changes. Not moving forward with a Chemical Innovations Institute given that increasingly comprehensive and sweeping chemical reforms that are being implemented in other countries puts CT at a disadvantage, not only in the global market place, but at a regional disadvantage.

MA has a nationally renowned and respected Institute focused on safer alternatives to cleaning chemicals and assists businesses with cutting edge alternatives information allowing them to participate in markets that may have once been closed to them. It's also important to note that this can be proposed in a way that does not cost the state any money.

I would like to thank the Environment Committee for their past commitment to reducing exposure to toxic substances and ask for your support for both HB 5126 and HB 5130.

Phil Sherwood,
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