



Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice

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Testimony of Mark Mitchell M.D., MPH In support of SB 210 February 23, 2011

Good Afternoon Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and members of the Committee. My name is Mark Mitchell. I am a public health physician, founder and for another week, President of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice. I am here to testify in support of SB 210 An Act prohibiting the use of Bisphenol A in thermal receipt paper and increasing the duties of the Chemical Innovations Institute. Bisphenol A or BPA is a known endocrine disrupter. The vast majority of non-industry funded studies, over 200, have found BPA exposure, even at very low doses, to be linked with prostate and breast cancer, obesity, attention deficit disorder, hyperactivity disorder, lowered sperm count and early onset of puberty. Yet 93% of Americans have detectable levels of BPA in their bodies.

We need to act now to control the spread of unbound BPA on about half of all thermal receipts. This dissemination has resulted in the contamination of the money supply. I participated in a recent test of 22 dollar bills from all over the country. 21 of the dollar bills were contaminated with powdery BPA, including the one that I submitted. If the money supply is contaminated, we are being contaminated.

The public health concern involved with BPA is an example of why we need a comprehensive chemical policy that will identify the toxic chemicals of high concern and suggest safer alternatives. Since only half of thermal receipts contain BPA, that means that there is a readily available alternative, although we do not know if it is a safer alternative, since safety and health information about the alternative—Bisphenol S—is not available. BPA is only one example of a chemical we are exposed to on a regular basis that poses serious public health dangers. There are over 70,000 chemicals that are approved for use in consumer products that are in fact untested due to the inadequacy of existing federal laws. The Toxic Substances Control Act, passed by Congress in 1976, gives the EPA very limited authority to require the testing of chemicals. Of the approximately 84,000 chemicals approved for use in commerce since 1976, EPA has only required testing of about 200. They have only been able to restrict use of 5 chemicals. Since our federal system for protecting the public health from toxic chemicals is broken, states like Connecticut need to take the lead, both in banning BPA and in the area of comprehensive chemical reform.

We support the Connecticut Chemical Innovations Institute's expanded role in identifying chemicals of concern, although we realize that the concept needs more work in order to allow it to do this while retaining its ability to carry out its original mission.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. I am available to answer any questions.