

Written Testimony of Pamela Puchalski, Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health (ConnectiCOSH), Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee, February 23, 2011, Testimony in Support of SB 210

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

My name is Pamela Puchalski and I am the Coordinator for the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health's (ConnectiCOSH) Safer Chemicals in the Workplace Campaign that focuses on chemical policy reform in Connecticut. We are keenly aware of and strongly support the need to ban Bisphenol-A (BPA) from thermal paper receipts and we ask that you do so as well. We also strongly believe in the need to develop an organized and comprehensive approach to identifying and phasing out those chemicals that, while commonly used, are being linked to various cancers, reproductive and neurodegenerative disorders and learning disabilities.

In the case of BPA, we know that it is an endocrine-disruptor. It has also been associated with breast and prostate cancers, learning and behavioral disorders, insulin-resistance, diabetes, obesity, reproductive disorders, erectile dysfunction and cardiovascular disease. Although the Connecticut Legislature has banned it in baby bottles and other food storage containers, it has been found in high levels on thermal paper cash receipts unbound and easily transmitted to our hands and other objects that the receipts come in contact with. Pregnant women, be they cashiers or consumers, will be exposing their unborn fetuses, the most susceptible of us to the dangers of BPA, by simply handling the receipts as human skin can absorb the unbound BPA.

More than 82,000 synthetic chemicals have been produced for use in the United States since World War II. Only a small number of these have been adequately tested for their potential impact on the workers who use them and the consumers who purchase products containing them. OSHA has adopted workplace exposure limits for approximately only 7% of the chemicals used in the U.S. in high volume and the U.S. has only phased out five substances out of the approximately 80,000 in commerce. Workers who regularly come in contact with dangerous substances, such as cashiers who regularly handle BPA laden cash receipts, and who therefore receive a higher dose than the general public, will ultimately bear a disproportionate share of the adverse impacts of products made with toxic chemicals. A conservatively estimated 50,000 - 60,000 deaths occur in our country each year due to occupational toxic chemical exposures and other occupational illnesses. (Leigh, et al, 2000; NIOSH; Steenland, et al, 2003).

Toxic chemicals and heavy metals are widely used in products and industry, and threaten health and child development. Over 200 diseases and disorders are now linked to toxins in our everyday environments. The President's Cancer Panel found in 2010 that human exposure to harmful chemicals has been "grossly underestimated". In Connecticut, one of the largest occupational epidemiology studies in the US is currently assessing the links between chemical exposures in the workplace and a rare form of brain cancer.

Diseases associated with toxic chemicals are costly both to the individual and to our society as a whole. Last year's efforts to reform the federal Toxic Substances Control Act were stalled and so it is once again, up to the states to take up arms against the continuing silent invasion of disease causing chemicals. Let's not wait for more studies to show the link between chemical exposures and cancer and other illnesses among workers, consumers, and children. We should support a comprehensive approach to identifying and phasing out toxic chemicals now.

ConnectiCOSH promotes safer chemicals, safer products, and safer jobs. We need legislators to do the same. We hope that you will continue to vote Connecticut as a leader and an example in chemical policy reform by voting for Senate Bill 210.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Pamela Puchalski

ConnectiCOSH

683 North Mountain Road · Newington, CT 06111
(860) 953-COSH (2674) · Fax (860) 953-1038
pamela.ctcosh@snet.net