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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair*

Environment Committee
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Testimony In Favor of
SB 210 AA Prohibiting The Use Of Bisphenol-A In Thermal Receipt Paper
And Increasing The Duties Of The Chemical Innovations Institute

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Sierra Club-Connecticut Chapter. I am also a director of Rivers Alliance and of the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

The Sierra Club believes that the intentional introduction of toxics into our environment is a significant environmental issue, and appropriately within the scope of our advocacy agenda.

It is commonly accepted now that Bisphenol-A is a threat to our health. The chemical has been linked to reproductive disorders, endocrine disorders, cancer, brain development and fat metabolism. The legislature recognized this with passage of PA 09- 103 (HB 6572), AA Banning Bisphenol-A in Children's Products and Food Products.

According to the NRDC, we produced more than 2 billion pounds of BPA in 2004. Our concern originally was its use in polycarbonate plastics, such as re-useable beverage containers. We then focused on BPA as the ubiquitous liner for food cans.

We now understand that thermal register receipt paper is a significant transmittal medium. The BPA used in printing the text is not bound into the paper, so that it easily transfers from the paper upon casual contact. Anyone who has accepted a thermal register receipt from a store clerk has transferred BPA from the receipt to their skin, where it is absorbed.

This bill is another in a series of important legislative actions to reduce our exposure to toxic substances. Because alternatives are now under development, SB 210 allows a lead time of several years to allow industry an adequate window to switch to a safer alternative. This may be considered somewhat generous, but it does recognize the need to balance immediate environmental and health needs and industry's lead time to convert to non-toxic practices and materials.

The 1976 federal Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA) has failed its mission to identify and ban toxic substances, having identified only a handful of substances of concern. Lacking strong federal action, it is incumbent on the states to protect their residents. The legislature created the Chemical Innovations Institute in 2010 (PA 10-164, HB5126) to provide an expert resource on toxic substances and safer alternatives. The Institute, housed at UCONN, must seek its own funding-none comes from the state budget.

SB 210 specifically charges the Institute with identifying toxics substances, and reporting annually to the legislature. Many states, countries, regions, and research organizations publish regularly on this issue, so the Institute need not fund its own research facilities, but instead look to published research findings. The lists of chemicals it identifies may be used to craft future legislation, but the specifics of such future action are wisely left out of SB 210. It merely provides the first step—the identification for Connecticut of toxics substances we should consider replacing with safer alternatives. As the bill is non-directive as to how the Institute would carry out this request, other than saying explicitly that it may look to existing standards, the bill does not seem to encroach on academic freedom.

Sierra suggests adding to the reporting requirement the committee with cognizance of public health, otherwise known as the “Public Health Committee”.

We refer you to the well-crafted testimony of Dr. Tim Morse, director of the Institute, to which we subscribe in full, and recommend that the committee work closely with Dr. Morse to continue the process of defining the Institute.