



**Written Testimony of Anne Hulick, Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee,
March 7, 2011.**

Testimony in Support of:

**Senate Bill 205 AN ACT REQUIRING CERTAIN THERMOSTAT
MANUFACTURERS TO PAY INCENTIVES FOR THE RETURN OF MERCURY
THERMOSTATS**

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

My name is Anne Hulick, RN, MS, JD and I am the Coordinator of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut (CSHC). I am also a nurse with many years of experience in environmental health. CSHC is a large coalition comprised of over fifty member organizations of health professionals, environmental justice advocates, labor groups, public health professionals, environmental experts, faith based groups, scientists and many individuals across Connecticut that are concerned about the growing body of research linking exposure to toxic chemicals with the rise in serious diseases.

The Coalition supports SB 205 An Act Requiring Certain Thermostat Manufacturers to Pay Incentives for the Return of Mercury Thermostats. The Coalition has a long track record for supporting more health protective policies aimed at reducing exposure to toxic chemicals. SB 205 is another step in the right direction for Connecticut.

In 2002, Connecticut passed a comprehensive law which phased out the sale of many products that contain mercury. This was, in part, due to the significant amount of scientific research that showed the harmful effects of mercury exposure particularly to the pregnant women and children. Mercury is a highly toxic metal and a neurotoxin. There have been an overwhelming amount of peer-reviewed scientific studies documenting the hazards of mercury exposure. Evidence suggests that exposure to mercury, and other toxic metals, has a profound effect on the developing brain at levels previously thought to be safe. Exposure to mercury particularly during critical windows of development, such as when a first trimester pregnant mother eats fish, may affect the normal development of specific, sequential neurobiological processes.¹ In fact, the latest research suggests that exposure to industrial chemicals like mercury could be creating a “pandemic of subclinical neurotoxicity—harm to the brain and nervous system that is not linked to a specific diagnosis.”²

¹ Safer Chemicals Healthy Families, “The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act” (Jan. 2010), p. 9.

² Id. at 9.

This is particularly worrisome when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that one in six women of child bearing age have unsafe levels of mercury in their body. This translates to 630,000 babies born with unsafe exposure to mercury. Could exposure to harmful chemicals like mercury be the reason that neurodevelopmental disorders are on the rise in the U.S? We may not know for sure but recent evidence of early exposures and the rising incidence of disease is clearly cause for concern. Learning and developmental disabilities are now estimated to affect approximately 1 in six children under the age of 18 in the U.S. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is conservatively estimated to affect 2 million children and autism-spectrum disorder has seen a ten-fold increase in just fifteen years! About 30% of this dramatic rise cannot be explained away by changes in diagnostic criteria.³

Unfortunately, voluntary efforts to recycle thermostats containing mercury are not effective. SB 205 is one of best ways to assist homeowners in replacing old mercury thermostats with newer, energy efficient models and doing so safely! By passing SB 205, we can be assured that significant amounts of mercury will not end up in our landfills, our air and our water and harming Connecticut's most vulnerable citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of SB 205.

Sincerely,

Anne Hulick

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³ Id. at p.8.