

Teresa Eickel
478 Prospect Ave., Apt. 5
Hartford, CT 06105
860-680-2569
HB 5116

Good morning, my name is Teresa Eickel and I am the Executive Director of the Interreligious Eco-Justice Network, however today I am here as a private citizen. I am here because I feel a deep commitment to reducing the incredible toxic load that we now bear in our every day life. Chemicals that we are exposed to every day in our food packaging, clothing, cleaning materials and so on are known carcinogens, hormone disrupters, and neurotoxins. It is something that I take very personally, because on Nov. 18, 2010, I was diagnosed with advanced breast cancer. Upon hearing that, most people look at me and assume that I must have a genetic predisposition to cancer or I must have several risk factors. After all, I look healthy. How does a healthy person like me get cancer?

That's the question of the century, in my opinion. I don't have a family history or genetic predisposition to cancer. I don't have risk factors – I ate very healthily, didn't drink or smoke, and worked out every day. In fact, I had so few risk factors that my oncologist said, in our first appointment, "Wow. I wonder why you're here." Me, too. How do otherwise healthy people get aggressive, invasive cancer? I believe the answer can be found in the tens of thousands of toxins that have been released into our eco-system since World War II, a flood of chemicals that can be linked to ever rising cancer rates and asthma rates. I doubt it will be long before we find out that these chemicals are linked to neurological diseases as well, such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Being diagnosed at such an advanced stage with a large 5 cm tumor, extensive lymph node involvement, and lymphatic invasion was not good. And cancer, make no mistake, is hard. It's not a TV movie about a cheery woman in pink smiling through it all and wearing fun wigs. It's painful and exhausting, but most of all, it's sad. I could have lived a long time without seeing the look on my mother's face when the doctor said I had cancer – it looked like her world was crashing down around her. Or the look on my dad's face when I blurted out the news – it was like he had been punched in the stomach. I'll never forget the sight of my sister crying or the sound of my friends sobbing on the phone when I told them. It was so, so sad.

I started chemo on Dec. 14, finishing in March 2011. I had surgery in April 2011 and followed with radiation in May for six weeks. I still get a drug called Herceptin every three weeks – I will continue that until May. I'll do it all, every last bit, no matter how hard. I have to beat this. I need to live. I have a niece. She is 7 years old and if I die, she won't be OK. Even as she recovers and moves on, her ability to trust the world is a safe place to be will be permanently damaged. I cannot let that happen. I can't do that to her. So I have to live and I will do anything, anything, anything at all to do that. I have opted for the most aggressive of conventional treatments. I have changed my diet – I'm pretty much a vegan now, plus I don't eat any sugar, white flour, or caffeine. I workout

every day and practice yoga and qi gong. I meditate and I pray. I do different complementary and alternative therapies to supplement my conventional treatment. And I read labels. I read all of the labels for everything I buy, because I know that chemicals like BPA are dangerous and harmful and I don't want them anywhere near me or anyone I love. I'll do whatever it takes to beat this cancer, no matter how small, because I have to live.

BPA has been definitely linked to breast cancer. Recent studies showed that low levels of BPA made breast cancer cells overproduce a protein called Her2, a protein that is present in 30% of patients. The Her2 protein makes the cancer much more aggressive. I was positive for this protein. The presence of BPA has been found to block the breast cancer drug, Tamoxifen, and to make non-cancerous cells behave like cancer cells. I will be on Tamoxifen for at least five years, maybe ten. I have brought 10 copies of each article regarding these studies.

I was proud when CT banned BPA in baby bottles and infant cups and receipt paper. I believe that what we need is a ban on BPA, period. If something is so toxic that we need to warn people about it, then maybe we shouldn't allow its use. However, if a ban is not possible, then we should at least let consumers know that this highly toxic, heavily carcinogenic chemical is being used in our food packaging. It will be a start.

I urge you to pass this bill. It will make a difference and some of us need every advantage we can get.