Senator Meyer, Representative Roy, and honorable members of the Environment Committee, my name is Pamela Puchalski and I am the Project Coordinator for the Connecticut Council of Occupational Safety and Health. We support Senate Bill 93 An Act Concerning a Mercury Thermostat Collection and Financial Incentive Program because we believe that providing a financial incentive for the return of thermostats that contain mercury is the best option for improving the proper disposal of such thermostats that contain mercury.

Mercury has been used in numerous applications such as in the production of chlorine gas and caustic soda. It has also been used in batteries, thermometers, and thermostats. While its uses have long been taken for granted, its potential to affect human health has also been noted. The occupational use of mercury has been linked to brain cancer and disorders of the central nervous system. Those of us who have borne children have been recommended to avoid eating certain seafood because of the risk of ingesting mercury that could ultimately damage the nervous system of a developing fetus.

Since even a single gram of mercury is enough to contaminate all its creatures in a 20-acre lake, it seems that the retrieval of every possible gram of mercury that could be released into the environment instead of being properly recycled should be a main goal. While some individuals are vigilant about recycling even the simplest of items, many are not so disciplined. Thus a financial incentive would be a simple, yet potentially effective way to increase the possibility of those thermostats containing mercury to end up in a recycling bin and not in a landfill.

It has taken a long time to both recognize and develop plans to remove toxic substances such as lead, cadmium, and asbestos from consumer products, home environments, and workplaces yet these substances are still being found in our workplaces and in a variety of products. The result is continued exposure to our children and to us as workers and consumers. It is going to take time and diligence to rid ourselves of such toxins, but we must be persistent. In the case of mercury, where such a small amount can contaminate and have such far reaching consequences as noted earlier, we recommend moving forward with the most aggressive policy possible and in such a way that consumers and contractors will be rewarded for practicing diligence. This is why we support SB 93 and respectfully submit that you do so as well.

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