

**Written Testimony of Beka Apostolidis, RN, MS of Cromwell, CT,
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Public Health,
March 7, 2012**

Testimony in Support of:
**SB 274, AN ACT CONCERNING CHEMICALS OF HIGH CONCERN TO
CHILDREN**

Dear Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter and honorable members of the Committee on Public Health,

My name is Beka Apostolidis. I am a resident of Cromwell CT. I write in strong support of HB 5218 An Act Concerning Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products.

I am very concerned about toxic chemicals in products in our homes and in our children's nurseries and particularly aware of children's exposure to these chemicals. Infants and young children have higher rates of exposure to chemicals, including carcinogens, neurotoxins and endocrine disruptors due to their hand-mouth behavior and close proximity to products like changing pads, bassinette mattresses and nursing pillows and certain toys.

I've been a nurse for 16 years and am also clinical faculty at UCONN where I teach nursing students on the Oncology unit at Hartford Hospital. I am also a breast cancer survivor. Three years ago, at age 35, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. After going through two surgeries, radiation and oral tamoxifen, I am happy to say that my cancer is gone. I also lost my father to leukemia in 2004. My mother is a breast cancer survivor and we lost our 2 family dogs to cancer.

As a nurse and cancer survivor, I know that the cause of cancer and many serious diseases is still unclear. In my practice and as faculty, I see patients both young and old, battling serious cancers. But I do know that more and more scientific research shows that exposure to toxic chemicals is linked with these diseases. The 2010 President's Cancer Panel Report states 41% of Americans will be diagnosed with cancer at some point in their lives and determined that the true burden of environmentally induced cancer has been grossly underestimated.¹ Childhood cancer, particularly brain cancer and leukemia, has risen 20% in the last thirty years. Although we are doing a better job at reducing mortality, this trend is alarming. Cancer is now the 2nd leading cause of death for people under the age of 20.

While we can not do scientific human studies to prove causal relationships between exposure to toxic chemicals and cancer, there is an enormous amount of evidence that links exposure—even prenatally—to many diseases. In nursing, we are taught to use the precautionary principle when there is risk of harm. SB 274 takes steps to apply the

¹ President's Cancer Panel Report Annual Report 2008-2009, "Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk-What We Can Do Now." (April 2010) (found in executive summary, letter to the President)

precautionary principle for chemicals of high concern to children. We should not allow manufacturers to use chemicals that are harmful when we now understand that lifelong, cumulative exposure is contributing to the rising incidence of many serious diseases.

I applaud the members of the Public Health Committee for raising this important issue and urge you to support its passage this session.

Sincerely,

Beka Apostolidis, RN, MS
52 Clubhouse Drive
Cromwell, CT 06416