

Testimony submitted to the Public Health Committee of the CT General Assembly

March 7, 2012

Re: Testimony in support of SB 274, An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children

My name is Jean Graustein. I submit this testimony on behalf of the **Office for Catholic Social Justice Ministry of the Archdiocese of Hartford**.

Children, before and after birth, are uniquely vulnerable to harm from chemical exposures. The Roman Catholic Church, committed to protecting the right to life and the dignity of every person, supports legislation to better identify and understand the risks to children's health from unintended and unforeseen chemical exposures from consumer products, and to find effective ways to limit or eliminate these exposures.

Thousands of chemicals in consumer products have never been tested and their potential danger to children's health and development is unknown. Many chemicals are persistent and bio-accumulate in human bodies. Scientific studies are increasingly linking toxic chemicals with a range of negative health impacts, including hormonal and endocrine disruption, pre-term delivery, miscarriage, birth defects, breast cancer, and childhood cancers. Neurological and developmental disabilities from chemical exposures are often life-long, may not be treatable and, therefore, must be prevented.

Children in the womb are particularly vulnerable. As stated by the Catholic Coalition for Children and a Safe Environment, an alliance of 12 national Catholic health care, social service, religious and policy organizations: "Many chemicals can cross the placenta and may cause permanent damage to the child. Because children are exposed to environmental hazards at an earlier age than adults, they have more time to develop slowly progressing, environmentally triggered diseases. From conception through adolescence, they are in a dynamic, often sensitive state of growth as their immature nervous, respiratory, reproductive and immune systems develop. The effects upon children of many chemicals have still not been tested. While this does not mean we should or could live in a chemical free world, it does suggest more care and attention be given to environmental health protection."

Children living in poverty and those whose parents may be less educated or not fluent in English may have even greater exposure to hazards. All parents must have the information essential to protecting their children from harm, and the directions to the Commissioner of Public Health in this bill will advance that goal.

We defend the right to life, the right to a healthy environment, and the right of children to live with dignity and to realize the bright promise and opportunity of childhood. Protecting children from harmful chemical exposures is essential to making this vision and duty a reality.

We urge the Committee on Public Health to advance SB 274. Thank you.