



**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1916

**TESTIMONY OF CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION AND THE
CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF DIRECTORS OF HEALTH REGARDING
S.B. 274: AN ACT CONCERNING CHEMICALS OF HIGH CONCERN TO CHILDREN**

**PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
MARCH 7, 2012**

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Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, distinguished members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Kelly Rago. I am a graduate student in Public Health, and as part of my studies, I serve as an intern for the Advocacy Committee of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA). CPHA and the Connecticut Association of Directors of Health (CADH) are pleased to endorse Senate Bill 274, which would identify priority chemicals that are of high concern to children, and lead to possible bans of these chemicals in children's products.

When the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA) was created to allow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor and regulate chemical substances, over 60,000 chemicals were grandfathered in without requiring the producers of these chemicals to demonstrate their safety [1]. Over 20,000 new chemicals have been introduced since 1976 and despite EPA's power to regulate toxic substances under TSCA, testing has only been requested on approximately 200 chemicals [2,3]. Out of such a small portion of the chemicals reviewed, only five types of chemicals have been either banned or limited in use [2].

Chemical manufacturers maintain that chemical ingredients are proprietary information and therefore confidential, hindering the ability of the EPA and other researchers to assess their safety [3]. Furthermore, in 1989 the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans overturned an EPA ban of asbestos, a known carcinogen. The result: the EPA was left with limited ability to enforce bans of toxic chemicals, many of which, including asbestos, remain in widespread use in consumer products [6].

Asbestos is just one example of the TSCA's ineffectiveness; another is its failure to regulate the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA), which has been linked to cancer, cardiovascular damage, and many more health problems. Despite this fact, nearly six billion pounds of BPA are produced per year and used in thousands of products in households across the United States [7].

As the number of chemicals used in the United States has increased, so have the incidence rates for different types of cancers (brain, breast, lung, bladder, liver, prostate, kidney, and esophageal) as well as leukemias and lymphomas and skin melanomas [8].



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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has identified over 400 chemicals as “known, probably or possible” carcinogens [3]. The incidence rates of environmentally related childhood illnesses, such as asthma and childhood cancers, have also been steadily rising over the past 25 to 30 years [9].

The President’s Cancer Panel, in their 2008-2009 Annual Report, stated they were troubled to find that cancers due to environmental factors, including chemicals, have been severely underestimated [3].

Newer studies have identified certain chemicals as “obesogens.” These chemicals change a person’s metabolism, causing weight gain, adding to the burden of the current obesity epidemic. Children are frequently exposed to many of these chemicals, including industrial chemicals such as Bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates, Polychlorinated Biphenyl Ethers (PCBs), various pesticides, lead, and many more [10,11].

In a 2002 study, the Mount Sinai School of Medicine estimated the impact environmental pollutants have on children’s disease prevalence along with their associated healthcare costs. They calculated that the environmentally attributable portion of four common childhood illnesses – lead poisoning, asthma, cancer, and neurobehavioral disorders, are costing the United States approximately \$54.9 billion dollars annually [12]. In other words, unregulated chemicals are very costly to our health and our economy.

There is a growing nationwide movement to reform U.S. chemical policy. In the past few years several attempts to pass national reform efforts have failed; the Safe Chemicals Act of 2010 and the Toxic Chemicals Safety Act of 2010 both failed to become law [13]. Even the Inspector General of the EPA considers the country’s chemical policy to be inadequate in ensuring the safety of chemicals in the United States [14]. Due to the lack of movement on the federal level, states like California, Massachusetts, and Maine have taken the lead, filling in the gaps left by American chemical policy. In 2008, Maine signed into law the Act to Protect Children’s Health and the Environment from Toxic Chemicals in Toys and Children’s Products. Under this bill, chemicals are reviewed and prioritized based on the level of concern and the manufacturers must reveal toxic chemicals used in products. Maine’s goal is to identify a list of 1,751 “chemicals of concern” and from this list, 70 will be labeled as “chemicals of high concern,” to be considered priorities for regulation, by July 1, 2012 [15].

CPHA supports the reduction and eventual elimination of toxic chemicals in consumer products in order to improve the health of Connecticut citizens, particularly children. Rather than examining one chemical each year, adopting of a list of chemicals of high concern would more effectively address the harms these chemicals pose to children’s health and development. The state can also mandate the use of safer alternatives to these toxic chemicals [16]. Connecticut has been a leader in eliminating harmful chemicals such as BPA, lead and cadmium for consumer and children’s products and has the chance to be a leader in chemical policy reform by enacting legislation to review Connecticut’s toxic chemical policies and protect public health.



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