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SB 274

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 she worships the ground that I walk on. 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 these chemicals 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.

Every day, though, I woke up and thanked God that it was me, and not my niece or nephew. As hard as it was for my family, I can't imagine how hard it is for parents of children with cancer. I find it appalling that the Toy Industry, an industry that is supposed to be in the business of bringing joy to children, is here defending its right to expose them to toxic chemicals. Cancer is the 2<sup>nd</sup> leading cause of death for children. Children's cancers are far more deadly than adult cancers because only 3% of research dollars are spent on research for children's cancers. They have far fewer options for treatment than every adult in this room, which is why 75% of the patients in clinical trials are kids. If you have had cancer, you have benefited from the unbelievably brave children (and their parents) who have courageously participated in clinical trials.

Toxic chemicals are dangerous and unnecessary - we need to use non-toxic options. We can't continue to sacrifice the health and welfare of our most vulnerable citizens for the profit of corporations. This legislation is important – if we can identify and then eliminate these highly toxic chemicals, then we will help millions of people in CT live long, full lives. I urge you to pass this bill. It will make a difference and some of us need every advantage we can get.