Written Testimony of the Children's Environmental Health Center
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Committee on Children

February 28, 2013

Testimony in Support of:

1. RB 6526, TOXICS DISCLOSURE AND INNOVATION FOR HEALTHY CHILDREN

2. House Bill 6332, AN ACT CONCERNING TOXIC FIRE RETARDANTS IN CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, and honorable members of the Committee on Children:

As pediatricians, researchers and scientists at the Children's Environmental Health Center of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, a designated World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Children's Environmental Health, we strongly support 6526, An Act Concerning Toxics Disclosure and Innovation for Healthy Children and House Bill 6332, An Act Concerning Toxic Fire Retardants in Children's Products. The proposed legislation puts forth a genuine effort to decrease the exposure of vulnerable populations—infants and children—to toxic chemicals. Both bills represent major steps forward in achieving the goal of chemical reform in Connecticut.

Despite our best efforts to protect children, there have been repeated episodes in recent years in which children have been exposed to toxic chemicals. Children have been placed at risk of exposure to cadmium in toys, arsenic in CCA-treated wood play sets, and mercury in sneakers. They have also been exposed to toxic flame retardants in car seats, sleeping mats, and mattresses. Clearly, current regulatory standards are ineffective.

Parental concern about children's safety is well-founded; the developing bodies and brains of children and fetuses are uniquely vulnerable to the toxic effects of chemicals. Children often bear the brunt of the negative health consequences of chemicals in our environment. Though hundreds of chemicals known to have detrimental health effects on children have been identified and publicly listed, manufacturers still create products containing these toxins. The uncertainty regarding product safety can leave parents feeling frustrated and overwhelmed as they face choices as consumers and advocates for their children.

As environmental pediatricians, we struggle to answer the single most common question we receive from parents: "Is this product safe for my child?" The burden of determining which products and chemicals are safe and which are potentially dangerous cannot rest on the consumer alone. Legislation addressing the need to prevent the manufacturing of children's products containing chemicals that are known to be dangerous for children is critical.

Bill 6526 will allow for the identification of chemicals of high concern to children and the creation of a list of priority chemicals to target, similar to lists created by other states including Maine and Washington. Manufacturers whose products contain the chemicals listed must notify the Commissioner of Public Health of this fact and also submit a product innovation plan to replace the listed chemical with a less hazardous alternative. This bill will serve as testimony to the fact that Connecticut will not tolerate the use of known toxins in mass-produced children's products and will place the onus on manufacturers to replace harmful chemicals with safer agents. It is an important step forward in the process of chemical reform and in protecting the health of Connecticut's children.

Bill 6332 will ban the use of flame retardant chemicals in products designed for young children. These

chemicals have been universally acknowledged as toxic and potentially harmful to children, but they are present in numerous household products including those created for young children, such ascar seats, mattresses, changing pads, and other items. In addition, these chemicals have not been found to make materials less flammable as intended. Since products containing these chemicals are not labeled, parents cannot avoid them even if they try. It is imperative that legislators intervene to prevent their widespread use in children's products.

The proposed bills represent a major step forward in protecting the health of some of Connecticut's?most vulnerable citizens. They address parental concerns about the safety of children's products and the need for manufacturers to take responsibility for the chemicals they use. We reiterate our strong support for these bills and for the movement toward chemical reform in Connecticut.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony at this important hearing. We would be happy to answer any questions that arise.

Sincerely,

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