

Written Testimony of Pamela Puchalski
of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health
Before the Environment Committee
Public Hearing February 25, 2013

In support of SB 16 An act requiring the labeling of food and drink products that are packaged in materials that contain Bisphenol-A

Senator Meyer, Representative Gentile, and honorable members of the Environment Committee, my name is Pamela Puchalski. I am the Project Coordinator of the Connecticut Council on Occupational Safety and Health and I am submitting written testimony in support of SB 16 An act requiring the labeling of food and drink products that are packaged in materials that contain Bisphenol-A.

A few years ago, in this very committee, the fight against the known endocrine disruptor Bisphenol-A was begun. That year as well as in subsequent years the battle was won but the war against BPA continues. This year, the intent of SB 16 is not to ban it from food packaging but to label cans, bottles, and other food packaging items to simply state whether it contains BPA or not. A simple concept, yet one that I will appreciate if the passage of this bill does indeed occur. I read labels for food content already and now I would have piece of mind knowing that I would not have to surmise what the package was composed of but would simply be able to read it right on the food item.

The science against BPA is clear. It is an endocrine disruptor that can mimic and affect our naturally occurring hormones. It's presence in the body has been linked to a variety of reproductive disorders, behavioral and attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes, and cancers of the breast and prostate. As a teenager I suffered from a hormonal disorder and I know the physical and psychological discomfort that it caused me. Although no one ever pinpointed what caused my disorder, years later, in retrospect, I believe that I was the victim of the effects of chemicals in my food, potentially from the food itself or from the packaging that it was in.

My experience has made me that much more sensitive to the need to continue the fight against BPA in particular and toxic chemicals in general. There is an intense need to continue this fight because the use of chemicals is accepted and taken for granted. As workers and as consumers we are all exposed to substances over periods of time which are causing us harm in ways that have been identified in chronic health issues. Workers who regularly come in contact with dangerous substances also receive a higher dose than the general public and often bear a disproportionate share of the adverse impact of products made with toxic chemicals and metals. One study states that a conservative estimate of at least 50,000-60,000 deaths per year can be attributed to occupational toxic chemical exposures and other occupational illnesses (Leigh, et al, 2000; NIOSH, Steenland, et al, 2003) Children also receive a disproportionate share of contaminants from environmental exposure and considering that they are always snacking, we certainly need to make sure that those snacks are in BPA free packaging.

In summary, I ask you, members of the Environment Committee to continue the work that you have done in past years on BPA. This year help us to know whether or not the can of corn, or peas or refried beans that we are picking up is BPA free or not. Help us to have that choice.

Thank you,

Pamela Puchalski

Coordinator, ConnectiCOSH

683 North Mountain Road

Newington, CT 06111

(860) 953-2674