



**Testimony of Abraham Scarr, Director
Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG)
in support of Proposed House Bill 5035:
An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardants in Children's Products
and in support of Proposed House Bill 5036
An Act Concerning Children's Products and Chemicals of High Concern**

Chairperson Bartolomeo, Chairperson Urban and Members of the Committee: My name is Abe Scarr and I am the Director of the Connecticut Public Interest Research Group (ConnPIRG). Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of proposed House Bills No. 5035 and 5036: An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardants in Children's Products and An Act Concerning Children's Products and Chemicals of High Concern.

ConnPIRG is a non-profit, non-partisan consumer group. Our Safeguarding Public Health Program advocates for protections and rules that make sure our food, drugs, medical devices and other products are safe to use. As a longtime member of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut we are happy to join our colleagues today to urge the committee to support these important bills.

For the past 28 years, ConnPIRG has released an annual Toy Safety report, "Trouble in Toyland." Unfortunately, children still face numerous toxic threats to their health. In many ways, these threats are the most insidious, because unlike a choking hazard which can be seen and removed by parents, toxins may go undetected while inflicting serious damage to a child's health. There is simply no justification for exposing children to toxic risk and parents should be able to buy children's products without having to worry about doing so.

5035: An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardants in Children's Product

The chemicals banned for manufacture or sale in children's products by this bill are used as fire retardants, yet evidence suggests they are not effective for this purpose¹. The use of these chemicals in children's products is putting Connecticut's children needlessly at risk. This bill is an appropriate measure to protect children's health and I urge to the committee to support it.

5036 An Act Concerning Children's Products and Chemicals of High Concern

I grew up using Johnson and Johnson baby shampoo, with its comforting slogan, "No More Tears." It was recently revealed that this product contains chemicals that produce formaldehyde, a known human carcinogen.

¹ Shaw, S; Blum, A; Weber, R; Kurunthachalam, K; Rich, D; Lucas, D; Koshland, C; Dobraca, D; Hanson, S; Birnbaum; "Halogenated Flame Retardants: Do the Fire Safety Benefits Justify the Risks?" Reviews on Environmental Health Vol. 25, No. 4; (2010).

Unfortunately, due to lax federal policy, there are tens of thousands of chemicals on the market that have never been tested for their human health impacts. A large body of scientific evidence links exposure to toxic chemicals to chronic diseases on the rise over the past forty years.

More frightening than any single chemical is the effect of all of them as they interact and act upon human health. Exposure to toxic chemicals in a single product is unlikely to cause significant long term negative health impacts. But the ongoing and repeated exposure to the combination of formaldehyde in baby shampoo, toxic flame retardants in furniture, phthalates in toys, and so on, is a definite and huge public health threat.

We have the right to know if the everyday products we purchase and bring into our homes contain toxic chemicals that endanger the health of our children and families. We should ban the use of chemicals that pose the most acute risk to human health, use safer alternatives where we can and, at a bare minimum, label products containing dangerous chemicals so that consumers can make informed decisions.

House Bill 5036 is simple. It authorizes the Department of Public Health to establish a list of chemicals of concern, and to every two years make recommendations to the General Assembly on how to mitigate the risks of such chemicals to children. The bill has no fiscal note.

Johnson and Johnson agreed to replace the toxic chemicals in its baby shampoo with a safer alternative. But we simply cannot wait on one company at a time to do the right thing, one chemical at a time, one product at a time. The risk is too great. The health of our children and families is too precious. The available solutions are too clear.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of proposed House Bill 5035 and 5036.

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