

Testimony Regarding HB 5354
An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children

Committee on Children
March 6, 2014

Members of the Committee on Children, my name is Roberto Henry and I am a Public Health graduate student at the University of Connecticut. I am writing this testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA). The CPHA strongly supports HB 5354, *An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern to Children*, as an important initiative to protect the health of children.

Every day, in hospitals all across the United States, including St. Francis and Hartford Hospital right down the street, babies are born with an average of about 200 industrial chemicals, neurotoxins, carcinogens and endocrine disruptors in their blood [1]. Scientific evidence has linked exposure to these toxic chemicals with the alarming rise in many of the serious diseases we are seeing in this country [2]. These exposures can occur as early as in the womb, and are often associated with common consumer products [3].

Since the 1970s, there has been a 20% increase in children's brain cancer and leukemia [4]. In the past 30 years, we have also seen a rise in adult cancers, like breast cancer, testicular cancer and prostate cancer [5]. Behavioral and learning disorders are also on the rise. Latest estimates indicate that one in six children are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder [6]. ADHD now affects about 2 million more children in the U.S. than it did 10 years ago [7]. The problems do not end there; reproductive disorders have been increasing as well. In 2002, 40% more women experienced difficulty conceiving and maintaining a pregnancy than they did in 1982 [8]. Equally as serious, there have been significant increases in asthma in the past 30 years [9].

One could try to explain these increases in morbidity a multitude of different ways, but hundreds of peer-reviewed studies, that have been replicated, demonstrate strong links between toxic chemical exposures, beginning in the womb, and the conditions and diseases that were just mentioned [3]. Given that the connection between toxic chemical exposure from consumer products and serious illness has been tested and validated, precautionary measures must be taken.

The current federal regulations do not go far enough in protecting our state's children. It is necessary and pertinent that this bill is passed so that we can actively protect our children from toxic chemicals in the toys they play with, the utensils they eat with, and the products their parents keep in their home. If action is not taken to monitor and evaluate these seriously harmful compounds, you will be robbing the children of the great state of Connecticut of the bright and healthy futures they deserve.

The proposed bill, HB 5354, *AAC Chemicals of High Concern to Children* is simple, but it is a much-needed step in the right direction. The bill requires the Department of

Public Health, in conjunction with the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, and the Department of Consumer Protection, to identify chemicals that are of concern to children based on their toxicity and potential for exposure. Secondly, the Department of Public Health will be required to make recommendations for action regarding the identified chemicals of concern to the legislature every two years.

In an ideal world, finances would never factor into protecting the health and preserving the future for young children, but unfortunately, we do not live in such a world. However, as written and proposed, this bill has no fiscal impact on the state's budget. When compared to the enormous impact this bill will have on the health of children living in this state, it is an opportunity that cannot be passed up.

Exposure to toxic chemicals in commercial products has serious and detrimental health effects, especially in children, and even in fetuses. Parents in the state of Connecticut deserve the right to know what is in the products they buy for their children. Just like parents deserve the right to know that the food they feed their children is safe to eat, parents should know that the toy they gave their child for their birthday is safe to play with.

On behalf of CPHA, I thank the Committee on Children for your dedication to the health and wellbeing of Connecticut's children, and I urge the Committee to take action in favor of HB 5354.

References:

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