Written Testimony of Sarah Evans, PhD
of Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Children's Environmental Health Center
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Children's Committee
March 6, 2014

Testimony in Support of:

HB5354, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN'S EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS

Dear Representative Urban, Senator Bartolomeo and honorable members of the Children's Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of HB5354, An Act Concerning Children's Exposure to Chemicals. I am a postdoctoral researcher in Environmental Pediatrics at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City, a designated World Health Organization Collaborating Centre in Children's Environmental Health. In addition, I am a lifelong Connecticut resident and mother to a four year old. I received my doctoral degree from Cornell Medical College, where I focused on growth factors that are critical to proper brain development. At Mount Sinai, I am researching the effects of early life exposure to environmental chemicals on child development. Specifically, I am examining changes in behavior and gene expression in the brain in response to phthalate or Bisphenol A exposure.

My work adds to mounting scientific evidence that low level exposures to common environmental chemicals can have negative effects on cognition and behavior. In addition, many of these compounds have been associated with a growing list of adverse health effects including reproductive defects, asthma, obesity, and diabetes. Meanwhile autism, ADHD, asthma, diabetes, obesity and childhood cancers are increasing in ways that can't be explained by genetics or improved diagnostics. Children are particularly vulnerable to negative health effects of exposure to chemicals in their normal environments. Developmentally appropriate hand to mouth behaviors and higher breathing rates place young toddlers at increased risk of exposure. **Because the effects of many of these chemicals accumulate over time, young children are the most vulnerable to their effects.**

At the Children's Environmental Health Center we educate caregivers and teachers on how to minimize exposures. Yet it has become evident that these chemicals are so prevalent that complete avoidance is impossible. In fact, the CDC detects hundreds of chemicals with known carcinogenicity, neurotoxicity, and endocrine disrupting properties in bodily fluids, including breast milk. Posing yet another challenge is the fact that current regulations do not require pre-market testing for chemical safety in children's products, making it impossible to know all of the health risks associated with a particular chemical. When safety studies are conducted, they usually involve acute high dose exposures in adult animals. Thus we have little information on the impacts of a lifetime of exposure beginning in early childhood. Recent studies have found hormone-disrupting phthalates in children's backpacks and lunchboxes, and flame retardants in their nap mats. None of this information is included on the product label, requiring extensive research by parents already strapped for time. **The only way to truly protect our children is by legislative action and tighter regulations.**

Connecticut has been a pioneer of chemical legislation to protect children's health. We were the first state to ban BPA from baby bottles and infant formula containers, which led to voluntary removal by many companies, and finally a federal ban. We should continue to lead the way in comprehensive chemical

policy reform. **I urge the Committee to keep Connecticut at the forefront of protecting children from chemical exposures by passing HB5354.** With strong chemicals legislation in place an enormous burden will be lifted from parents. It shouldn't require research worthy of a master's degree to buy a lunchbox. Our time would be much better spent reading a book to our children.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sarah Evans

Sarah Evans, PhD
Fairfield, Connecticut