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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Public Health Committee  
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Testimony In Favor of  
SB 126 AAC Children's Exposure To Chemicals

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the volunteer Legislative Chair for the Connecticut Chapter of the Sierra Club. I hold a Masters of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies.

The knowing and intentional introduction of toxic chemicals into our environment is very much an environmental issue. The Sierra Club strongly endorses SB 126, as we have for its ancestors in the past few years, such as HB 6526 in 2013 and SB 274 in 2012. It is time this important bill becomes law.

For decades we have been aware that of the 70,000-80,000 chemicals in our environment, only a small handful have been banned or otherwise regulated, or even studied for toxicity.

In recent years we have followed Europe in moving towards the “precautionary principle”. The standard has changed from “sure, use anything until it is proven harmful beyond any legal doubt” to “when the accumulated evidence says you have a problem, its time to find a safe alternative”.

Why is SB 126 an important and significant piece of legislation? Because it establishes an appropriate and effective framework for the state to identify toxics which are of highest concern to us. This is far, far better than running annual legislation on individual chemicals without the prior guidance of DPH. Significantly, it starts with examining prenatal as well as childhood concerns.

In the past, we have run legislation on specific individual chemicals of interest, year after year, one chemical at a time. This provides no opportunity to prioritize our concerns. SB 126 instead establishes a program which utilizes the expertise of our state agencies to identify chemicals which should receive priority attention. It allows the state to reference lists already assembled, such as those from the European Union, Maine, Washington, California and Minnesota, and the Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse. Use of this program will both save us money and accelerate the move away from toxics and toward safer chemicals.

Any observer of legislative activity in the country knows that, in 2014, the action is at the state level. While a protective federal act would be optimal, its not happening. Not now. Not soon.

In opposing this bill year after year, industry has failed in its obligation to protect the public from the consequences of its products. The Sierra Club finds this denial of responsibility reprehensible. We do live in a capitalist society, where making money is the foundation of our economy. But it must be done with regard to the consequences. Minimizing the harm is just not optional. We recommend that corporations which produce consumer products must earn the trust and admiration of their customers by embracing and supporting this bill.

The Sierra club strongly endorses SB 126.