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Martin Mador, Legislative Chair

Committee on Children
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Testimony In Favor of
HB 5653 An Act Concerning Chemicals of High Concern for Children

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 HB 5653, as we have for its predecessors in the past few years, such as HB 5354 in 2014, HB 6526 in 2013 and SB 274 in 2012. It is well past time this important protection for our children becomes law. It is an embarrassment for the state of Connecticut, which is a leader on many important environmental issues, that we have failed to institute this program.

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 slowly 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 are these bills an important and significant piece of legislation? Because they establish 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. We strongly prefer 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 2015, 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. It must become a fundamental tenet of corporate conduct. Corporations which produce consumer products are well advised to earn the trust and admiration of their customers by embracing and supporting this bill.

The Sierra Club strongly endorses HB 5653.