

Testimony of Gretchen Raffa, MSW
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In support of *H.B. No. 6806 An Act Concerning Flame Retardants in Children's Products*

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and honorable members of the Committee on Children, my name is Gretchen Raffa, from Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of *HB6806 An Act Concerning Flame Retardants in Children's Products*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England's mission is to protect the right of all individuals to control their own fertility. Over the past decade new studies continue to demonstrate that environmental contaminants and exposure to chemicals can have a detrimental effect on one's reproductive health. As a trusted provider of reproductive health care to over 65,000 patients every year we are committed to educating ourselves and patients about the dangers and health risks from exposure to chemicals for women, men and their families.

Carcinogenic flame retardants have no place in children's products. Toxic chemical exposure during critical windows of fetal development and to young infants and children is of particular concern. There is growing scientific evidence that shows some industrial chemicals, called endocrine disruptors can cause serious risk to women's health such as infertility, breast cancer, early puberty, polycystic ovarian syndrome, abnormal uterus development, uterine fibroids, endometriosis, recurrent miscarriage and shortened lactation. Effects particular to reproduction in males include abnormal development of the prostate and urethra, decreased sperm count and quality, sexual dysfunction and increased risk of prostate cancer.ⁱ

Planned Parenthood of Southern New England has long fought for a woman's right to control her reproductive destiny which includes planning her family and raising her family in safe and healthy environments. We have a growing concern that the complexities of a woman's environment, including her physical geography, race, class, access to healthcare to name a few, can play a debilitating role on her fertility. This is why we have turned our attention to chemicals of concerns and reproductive toxicants, which are affecting the ability of women to plan their families; to become pregnant, have a healthy pregnancy, and give birth to a healthy child.

The time is now to reduce exposure to women, men and children. Reducing exposure to chemicals, including flame retardants, is a family planning issue for women and men. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2011) the current federal law "fails to protect children and pregnant women" from exposure to chemicals during critical windows of development. We urge you to support *HB 6806 An Act Concerning Flame Retardants in Children's Products*. We at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England believe this is an urgent matter of reproductive justice. All women should be guaranteed the right to control their own fertility, to have healthy babies and to parent their children in safe and healthy environments. Thank you.

ⁱ Guttmacher Policy Review Winter 2010, Volume 13, Number 1 <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/13/1/gpr131810.html>