



Testimony CGA Children's Committee
Testimony by Citizens Campaign for the Environment
Louis W. Burch, Program Coordinator

February 24, 2015
Hartford, CT

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban, distinguished members of the CGA Children's Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Louis Burch, program coordinator for Citizens Campaign for the Environment (CCE). Supported by over 80,000 members in Connecticut and New York State, CCE works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment. CCE would like to offer the following testimony in support of HB 6806- AAC Toxic Flame Retardants in Children's Products.

Triphosphate chemicals or *Tris*, are a type of chlorinated organophosphorus compound used as flame retardants in many common household products today. They are used in a wide variety of children's products, including toys, strollers, bedding, car seats, changing table pads, and many others. Tris flame retardants have been linked to cancers, kidney and liver damage, as well as developmental problems and brain damage. Unfortunately, the adverse health effects of these chemicals far outweigh their usefulness as flame retardants.

Products containing Tris attach to dust particles in the air and are easily inhaled. Children are disproportionately at risk from the potential health impacts of these chemicals, due to their small size and developing bodies. In fact, researchers estimate that a child can ingest up to ten times the amount consumed by adults due to their close proximity to the ground and tendency to engage in frequent hand-to-mouth behavior.

Tris has been detected in treated sewage effluent, drinking water supplies, rivers, estuaries, and in fish tissue as far afield as the Arctic. According to a 2002 USGS study analyzing 139 streams across the U.S., the Tris chemical TCEP was one of the most common contaminants found in the environment. Tris chemicals are a persistent bio-accumulative toxin, meaning that once they enter into the body, they never leave. Scientists have found these chemicals in umbilical cords and even breast milk from nursing mothers. These chemicals build up in the fatty tissues where they increase the risk of health problems, particularly among fetuses and small children.

Additionally, Tris threatens the health of our firefighters. When they burn, flame retardants release chlorine gas, which can be lethal as it converts to hydrochloric acid in the lungs. They can also create higher levels of carbon monoxide than products that don't contain these chemicals. As the prevalence of plastics and household goods containing flame retardants increases, firefighters find themselves working in increasingly toxic environments. Health reports from around the country indicate that firefighters may, in fact, develop certain cancers at a much higher rate than those who are not exposed to burning flame retardants. Firefighters are about twice as likely to develop testicular cancer as the general population.

CCE supports the passage of legislation to eliminate toxic flame retardants from children's products, but strongly recommends applying the law to products made for all children. Simply prohibiting flame retardants in products for children three and under creates a loophole for the industry, as companies that simply label their products for children older than three would not be required to comply with this important children's health protection.

Despite being marketed as a necessary flame retardant, Tris chemicals in various children's products provide little fire safety benefit. Fire prevention, better product design, and non-toxic alternatives are safer, more effective ways to protect against fires, without putting our children at risk. Connecticut should act quickly to prohibit these dangerous chemicals from children's products. **Citizens Campaign for the Environment strongly supports HB 6806 and respectfully urges this committee amend this bill to include a definition of 'children's products' that protect all children.**

On behalf of our members in Connecticut, we appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony and look forward to working with you on this important issue.