



February 29, 2016

Dear Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and Members of the Children's Committee:

My name is Abigail Levy. I live in Greenwich and **I support Bill 5299, *An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals in Children's Products and Upholstered Residential Furniture.***

I am writing as a mom to three young children and as a member of **Greening our Children**, a growing community of parents in our state who are committed to protecting children from environmental toxins that harm health.

Doesn't it sound counterintuitive to ban flame retardants from children's products and our home furniture? Don't all parents want their kids and home safer from fire? While the decision to add these chemicals to polyurethane foam found in children's products and upholstered residential furniture was made decades ago with safety in mind, we now know that these added flame retardants do not actually retard fire and they have the unintended consequence of making kids sick. So, why do we still find them in our baby's changing pads, nursing pillows, our couches and other products that our families have contact with hours a day?

HB 5299 is an opportunity to rectify this unfortunate situation. The pounds of added flame retardant chemicals, like TDCPP and TCEP and others found in our homes, are known carcinogens. As the foam breaks down the chemicals are released into our house dust. Exposure to these flame retardants has been associated with reduced IQ, behavioral problems, obesity, abnormal hormonal and reproductive development and even cancer. And studies show that it's our toddlers, like my 3 and 5 year old, who have the highest concentrations of flame retardant chemicals in their bodies due to their age appropriate movements - crawling, cruising and hand-to-mouth behaviors. Basically, rolling in and eating toxic dust. Sadly they are also the most vulnerable to life-long health implications because their bodies are still developing and these chemicals stay in their fatty tissue for years.



If we knew flame retardants would prevent catastrophic fire, then *maybe* it would be worth exposing kids to these toxins and increasing risk of disease. But we know from the Consumer Product Safety Commission's 2012 study that adding flame retardants to foam does not improve fire safety. Since there is no benefit to outweigh the real risk, let's choose to make our kids health a priority.

Up till now, the onus has been on us parents to protect our children from harm caused by flame retardants. We are told to vacuum the dust in our homes frequently with a HEPA filter vacuum, to wet mop, to wash our children's hands frequently, to take the initiative to ask salesmen if the couch or boppy we want to purchase is flame-retardant free. Is this really how we should be protecting children from exposure to cancer causing chemicals and serious long term disease? That strategy is not working, and it is not realistic for busy families. What we need is legislation to protect all children in this state from exposure to these chemicals, and to protect children from any toxic replacement chemicals that may be substituted in their place.

Thank you Madam Chairs and Members of the Committee for your attention. I respectfully submit this statement on behalf of parents who want their children to grow up without being exposed to flame retardant chemicals.

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