

**Testimony of Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Inc.**  
**In support of *House Bill 5299, An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals in Children's Products and Upholstered Residential Furniture***

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and honorable members of the Committee on Children, my name is Susan Yolen, Vice President of Public Policy and Advocacy at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England testifying in support of *HB5299 An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals in Children's Products and Upholstered Residential Furniture*. Planned Parenthood of Southern New England's mission is to protect the right of all individuals to control their own fertility. Continued research demonstrates 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 64,000 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.

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists states that reducing exposure to toxic environmental agents is a critical area of intervention for obstetricians, gynecologists, and other reproductive health care professionals. Preconception and prenatal exposure can have a profound and lasting effect on reproductive health across the life course. Flame retardants have been linked with impaired neurodevelopment, premature delivery, low birth weight and stillbirth.<sup>i</sup> Many flame retardants persist in our bodies for years and can pass through the placenta from a mother to her growing fetus. These chemicals accumulate in breast milk, further exposing the newborn to flame retardants.

Based on 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.<sup>ii</sup>

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 understand that right is directly linked to a woman's environment, including her physical geography, race, class, access to healthcare to name a few, all which can play a debilitating role on her fertility. Many environmental factors harmful to reproductive health disproportionately affect vulnerable and underserved populations.<sup>iii</sup> 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 *HB5299 An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals in Children's Products and Upholstered Residential Furniture*. We at Planned Parenthood of Southern New England believe this is an important reproductive justice issue because 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.

- 
- <sup>i</sup> Exposure to Toxic Environmental Agents, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists October 2013, <https://www.acog.org/-/media/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Health-Care-for-Underserved-Women/ExposuretoToxic.pdf>
- <sup>ii</sup> Guttmacher Policy Review Winter 2010, Volume 13, Number 1 <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/gpr/13/1/gpr131810.html>
- <sup>iii</sup> Exposure to Toxic Environmental Agents, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists October 2013, <https://www.acog.org/-/media/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Health-Care-for-Underserved-Women/ExposuretoToxic.pdf>