February 25, 2019

I am Sandra Carbonari, a primary care pediatrician and the medical director of the Connecticut Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am testifying on behalf of our nearly 1000 pediatrician members in favor of HB 6516, AN ACT CONCERNING THE USE OF FLAME RETARDANT CHEMICALS IN CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS AND UPHOLSTERED RESIDENTIAL FURNITURE.

There is a strong public health case for banning organohalogen flame retardants in four product categories: durable infant or toddler products, children’s toys, child care articles, and other articles intended for use by children; furniture sold for use in residences; mattresses and mattress pads; and the plastic casing of electronic articles. The American Academy of Pediatrics has actively petitioned the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) requesting that CPSC use its authority under the Federal Hazardous Substances Act to ban the use of these substances.

Organohalogen flame-retardants are widely present in the environment and human exposure is extensive. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 97 percent of U.S. residents have measurable quantities of organohalogen flame retardants in their blood.

These chemicals pose serious public health concerns, particularly for children. They are associated with adverse effects including: reproductive impairment; neurological effects, including decreased IQ in children, learning deficits, and hyperactivity; endocrine disruption and interference with thyroid hormone action; genotoxicity; cancer; and immune disorders, including a strong emphasis on the disproportionate burden of the health effects of flame retardant chemicals on children.

In 2017 an article in an Oregon State University publication stated that “researchers found a significant relationship between social behaviors among children and their exposure to widely used flame retardants, said Molly Kile, an environmental epidemiologist and associate professor in the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at OSU.

"When we analyzed behavior assessments and exposure levels, we observed that the children who had more exposure to certain types of the flame retardant were more likely to exhibit externalizing behaviors such as aggression, defiance, hyperactivity, inattention and bullying," said Kile, the corresponding author of the study, which was published today in the journal Environmental Health.”

Protecting children from the dangers of fire is, of course of utmost importance. However, to expose 97% to a harmful substance is not the way to do it. The pediatricians of the CT Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics join our national colleagues in advocating for the removal of organohalogen from children’s products and household furniture.