



**Connecticut  
Public Health  
Association**

Promoting Public Health in Connecticut Since 1916

# *Connecticut Public Health Association*

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## **Facts and Recommendations on Creating a Chemical Innovations Institute**

Connecticut must ensure that there is a reduction in the development and use of toxic chemicals that are linked to the rising incidence of numerous chronic diseases. Specifically, the Connecticut Public Health Association urges the creation of a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut Health Center, whose overarching goals would be to keep businesses up to date on international and national chemical policy changes, to train businesses to evaluate chemicals for safer alternatives, and to increase the use of safer alternatives among both workers and consumers. CPHA recommends the legislature act favorably on H.B. 5126 in order to position Connecticut as an innovator and leader in environmental health and a greener economy.

### **Background**

The federal law designed to regulate the manufacture and use of toxic chemicals has not been updated in over 30 years [1], and as a result the EPA is able to require testing on only 200 of more than 30,000 chemicals produced and used in the United States. [2] A recently published report looked at numerous peer-reviewed articles and found overwhelming evidence suggesting that chemical exposures have contributed significantly to the rise in many chronic diseases. [3] It noted that “estimates of the proportion of the disease burden that can be attributed to chemicals vary widely, ranging from 1% of all disease to 5% of childhood cancer to 10% of diabetes, Parkinson’s disease, and neurodevelopmental deficits to 30% of childhood asthma.” [3] (*internal citations omitted*) While the federal government will have to take steps to amend the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, states cannot rely on this and must begin to combat the prevalence of these deadly chemicals.

A Chemical Innovations Institute can be expected to benefit the state and its citizens in a myriad of ways. **First**, it will enable Connecticut to both contribute to and tap into similar programs in other states so that we may all share valuable resources while working towards mutual goals. The Toxic Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts (TURI) is one of these programs, and has experienced enormous success. One paper found that TURI “helped industry reduce the use of toxic chemicals by 40%, byproduct waste by 58%, and toxic emissions by 80%.” [4] **Second**, the Institute would help businesses save money through the adoption of more efficient and safer processes that enable them to compete in markets like that of Europe with more stringent chemicals regulations. The same paper remarks that TURI saved companies a total of \$14 million so far. [4] **Third**, the most obvious benefit would be a reduction in healthcare costs associated with chronic diseases. Beginning with the Institute, if such programs lead to even a .01% reduction of health care costs nationally, direct medical savings in Connecticut would exceed \$50 million each year. [5] This sum does not include the many other kinds of savings specific to individuals, such as those raising children with severe learning disabilities. **Fourth**, it would generate safe, green jobs. **Fifth**, and most importantly, the Institute would do all of these things without requiring the state to put forth any money at all. Even if the federal government doesn’t provide money for the project, there are many other sources of funding being explored.

### **Recommendation**

CPHA supports the formation of a Chemical Innovations Institute at the University of Connecticut Health Center. More than thirty years of research studies show that harms caused by toxic chemicals are preventable, and it can be done so at absolutely no cost to the state. In fact, the Institute would have the long-term impact of saving the state money. CPHA urges the Connecticut legislature to act favorably on H.B. 5126 and allow Connecticut to be one of the pioneers in the field of toxic chemical reduction and a new, greener economy.

## References

- 1) Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976, 15 U.S.C. §2601 et seq. (1976)
- 2) Testimony of Lisa P. Jackson (Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) before the Committee on Environment and Public Works 3 (Dec. 2, 2009), *available at* [http://www.epa.gov/ocir/hearings/testimony/111\\_2009\\_2010/2009\\_1202\\_lpj.pdf](http://www.epa.gov/ocir/hearings/testimony/111_2009_2010/2009_1202_lpj.pdf)
- 3) SAFER CHEMICALS HEALTHY FAMILIES, A Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act
- 4) <http://www.louisvillecharter.org/paper.substitutes.shtml>
- 5) Press Release, Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, Moving Beyond Toxic Chemical “Whac-A-Mole,” Jan. 21, 2010, *available at* [http://safehealthyct.org/documents/Health\\_report\\_release\\_1\\_21\\_10.pdf](http://safehealthyct.org/documents/Health_report_release_1_21_10.pdf)