



**Connecticut
Public Health
Association**

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Connecticut Public Health Association

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Facts and Recommendations on HB 6526: AAC Toxics Disclosure and Innovation for Healthy Children

Background

Before 1976, there was no record of the chemicals being manufactured, imported and used in the United States and therefore no way to control or monitor them [1]. To address this problem, the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 (TSCA) was created to allow the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor and regulate chemical substances.

Problems with the TSCA

When the TSCA was enacted, over 60,000 chemicals were grandfathered in without requiring the chemical manufacturers to demonstrate their safety [2]. Over 20,000 new chemicals have been introduced since 1976 and despite EPA's power to regulate toxic substances under TSCA, testing has only been requested on approximately 200 chemicals [3,4]. Out of such a small portion of the chemicals reviewed, only five types of chemicals have been either banned or limited in use [3]. Chemical manufacturers maintain that chemical ingredients are proprietary information and therefore confidential, which has hindered the ability of the EPA and other researchers to assess their safety [4].

The EPA's inability to successfully regulate the use of toxic chemicals was demonstrated in 1989 when the EPA attempted to ban a majority of products containing asbestos. Asbestos exposure is known to be responsible for the deaths of at least 10,000 Americans per year from mesothelioma, lung cancer, gastrointestinal cancer, and asbestosis (a lung disease) [5]. Nonetheless, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans overturned the EPA ruling in 1991, leaving very few products with regulations pertaining to asbestos [6]. Asbestos remains in use in the mining, automobile, construction, and textile industries exposing workers and their families to the dangerous effects of asbestos [7]. Another example of TSCA's ineffectiveness is the chemical Bisphenol A (BPA), which has been linked to cancer, cardiovascular damage, and many more health problems. Despite this fact, nearly six billion pounds of BPA are produced per year and used in thousands of products in households across the United States [8].

Health Impacts of Toxic Chemicals

The President's Cancer Panel, in their 2008-2009 Annual Report, stated they were troubled to find that cancers due to environmental factors, such as chemicals, have been severely underestimated [4]. In fact, as the number of chemicals used in the United States has increased, so have the incidence rates for different types of cancers (such as brain, breast, lung, bladder, liver, prostate, kidney, esophageal, leukemias and lymphomas, and skin melanomas) [4,9]. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), an agency of the WHO, has identified a list of over 400 chemicals as known, probable or possible carcinogens, which is considered the "gold standard" list of carcinogenic chemicals [4].

Recent studies have also identified certain chemicals as "obesogens," chemicals which change a person's metabolism leading to weight gain, and which are thought to contribute to the current obesity epidemic [10,11]. Children are frequently exposed to many of these obesogens, including industrial chemicals such as Bisphenol A (BPA), phthalates, Polychlorinated Biphenyl Ethers (PCBs), various pesticides, lead, and many more [10,11].

In a 2002 study, the Mount Sinai School of Medicine estimated the impact environmental pollutants have on children's disease prevalence along with their associated healthcare costs. They calculated that the environmentally attributable portion of four common childhood illnesses – lead poisoning, asthma, cancer, and neurobehavioral disorders, are costing the United States approximately \$54.9 billion dollars annually [12]. In other words, unregulated chemicals are very costly to our health and our economy.

Comprehensive Toxic Chemical Reform

There is a growing nationwide movement to reform U.S. chemical policy. In the past few years several attempts to pass national reform efforts were unsuccessful as the Safe Chemicals Acts of 2010 and 2011 and the Toxic Chemicals Safety Act of 2010 failed to pass on the federal level [13,14]. Even the Inspector General of the EPA considers current law to be inadequate in ensuring the safety of chemicals in the United States [15].

Due to the lack of movement on the federal level, California, Maine, Minnesota and Washington have passed comprehensive chemical reform laws in the past few years to address the gaps in American chemical policy [16]. In 2008, Maine became the first state to pass a comprehensive chemical reform bill, the *Act to Protect Children's Health and the Environment from Toxic Chemicals in Toys and Children's Products*. This model law required the Maine Department of Environmental Protection along with other state agencies to review and prioritize "chemicals of concern," and required manufacturers to reveal chemicals used in consumer products. Maine has subsequently identified a list of 49 "chemicals of high concern," to be considered priorities for regulation [17].

Recommendations

CPHA supports the reduction and eventual elimination of toxic chemicals in consumer products in order to improve the health of Connecticut citizens, particularly children. The adoption of a list of chemicals of high concern would more effectively address the harms these chemicals pose to children's health and development. The state can also mandate the use of safer alternatives to these toxic chemicals as other states have done [17]. Connecticut has been a leader in eliminating harmful chemicals such as BPA, lead and Cadmium for consumer and children's products and has the chance to be a leader in chemical policy reform by enacting legislation to review Connecticut's toxic chemical policies and to protect the public's health.

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For additional information on CPHA's position on comprehensive toxic chemical reform or other public health issues, please contact CPHA Advocacy Chair, Colleen O'Connor, at colleen.oconnor@cpha.info or Noele Kidney, Project Coordinator at noele.kidney@cpha.info.

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