Connecticut Public Health Association
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TESTIMONY OF THE CONNECTICUT PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION REGARDING *H.B. 05314* AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD SAFE PRODUCTS AND BANNING CADMIUM IN CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN
MARCH 2, 2010

Distinguished members of the Committee on Children, my name is Colleen O'Connor and I thank you for the opportunity to testify today on behalf of the Connecticut Public Health Association (CPHA). CPHA is pleased to support H.B. 5134, which would ban cadmium from use in children's products.

Connecticut's legislators have worked very successfully over the past few years to phase out lead, asbestos and Bisphenol A (BPA) from children's products and some consumer goods. However, many hazardous substances remain on the market and in children's products. One of these potentially harmful substances is Cadmium. Cadmium is a toxic metal commonly found in nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cad) batteries, paints, metal coatings, and plastics, and is a prevalent environmental contaminant. [1,2,3] Cadmium exposure in the general population has traditionally been associated with cigarette smoke, dietary sources, house dust, occupational exposures and occasionally through contaminated drinking water. [2,3,4] Recently, cadmium has been used in making jewelry, often as part of the metal alloys in pendants and charms commonly found in children's jewelry. [1] Manufacturers, particularly those based in India and China, are replacing lead with cadmium as lead has been banned from children's products in many states. [1]

Unfortunately, there is no adequate regulatory system in the United States to ensure chemicals are safe and to prevent toxic substances from being used in children's products. Before using new chemicals in consumer products, current federal regulations do not require manufacturers to prove their safety--the burden falls to consumer to demonstrate that a chemical is toxic [5]. In fact, only 200 of the 80,000 chemicals created over the past thirty years have been adequately tested for their effects on human health [1,3,5].

Most of what we know about the harms of cadmium is from occupational exposures in adults in industrial workplaces and include liver, kidney and severe respiratory problems. [2,3,5] Work exposures have even resulted in death [3]. As a result cadmium is monitored by OSHA in workplaces

Some studies have found reproductive harm from cadmium in animals including: problems with conception at multiple stages, miscarriage and birth defects. [4,5] The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reports that some cadmium can be detected in the bodies of most people at levels shown to cause reproductive abnormalities [1]. Cadmium may act as a steroid hormone in the human body, mimicking the effects of estrogen. [2] As a result, some researchers hypothesize that exposure could cause or accelerate hormone dependent cancers, like some breast cancers, or that cadmium may be associated with endocrine and immune system disorders; however, more study is needed [2,4] There is ample evidence demonstrating that prenatal exposure to other hormone disruptors is linked with reproductive tract disorders, certain cancers, birth defects, and early puberty and menstruation in girls [1,2,10].

Cadmium exposure should be limited in children as much as possible to prevent possible health effects as children, and the accumulation of cadmium which may cause diseases later in life. [4] More research is needed to determine the exact effects of cadmium on children; however, there is enough compelling evidence that cadmium is harmful to humans. A recent study by the Center for Environmental Health found levels of cadmium in jewelry sold in national stores such as Saks and Aeropostale that were significantly higher than is thought to be safe. [1] While it is not illegal to use cadmium in jewelry in the U.S., several states including California and Washington, have already enacted legislation limiting the amount of cadmium that can be safely used in consumer products. [1,3,7] Washington has banned use of cadmium of more than 40 parts per million by weight for use in children's products [7]. There is also pending federal legislation seeking to ban cadmium in all children's jewelry (HR4428) [1,3]

There are enormous public health, economic and human costs associated with the presence of toxic chemicals and metals in our children's environments. Currently, we spend $7,000 per person per year on healthcare in the U.S.--this does not include the additional health care and social services costs of disability, the costs of unemployment or the loss of productivity associated with chronic disease [1]. Phasing harmful chemicals and metals out of children's products may reduce the incidence of disease associated with toxic chemicals, contribute to a reduction in overall health care expenditures, and ultimately improve health outcomes [1]. The Connecticut Public Health Association supports limiting the use of cadmium in children's products and urges members of the Environment Committee to act in favor of H.B. 05314. CPHA thanks you for your continued dedication to the health and well being of Connecticut's children and residents.

References

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