

Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT

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Experts Urge Action on Toxic Toys *Legislators Briefed on the Health Effects of Lead, Phthalates, and Bisphenol A*

Hartford-- Just one day following announcements from the National Toxicology Program and Health Canada that the concerns about the toxicity of bisphenol A cannot be dismissed, Connecticut legislators met to learn more about this and other substances of high concern that would be phased out under proposed state legislation. House Bill 5601, An Act Banning Children's Products Containing Lead, Phthalates and Bisphenol A, has passed through the legislature's Environment and Appropriations Committees, and will soon be referred to General Law.

"As legislators, we have a responsibility to pay attention to the millions of recalled children's products and the growing body of science surrounding toxic chemicals," said State Representative Richard Roy (D-119). "Currently, consumers are unknowingly being exposed to hormone disruptors in plastics and heavy metals in everyday products. We need to pass legislation that will phase out these health hazards and protect children from such exposures."

While many Connecticut legislators agree with Representative Roy, intense lobbying from large out-of-state chemical companies and the Toy Industry Association is creating confusion among some legislators trying to sort through the information.

"With a national debate growing around the need for our 30-year-old safety laws to catch up with the science, Connecticut has a vital leadership role to play," said Sarah Uhl, coordinator of the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT. "Phasing lead completely out of children's products should be a clear priority and would be a major victory for children's health, but this is only a first step toward a solution to the toxic toys problem. We urge legislative leaders to address the urgent public health issue of hormone disruptors as well."

In an effort to convey accurate, independent science, legislators invited health professionals and experts in the field to speak on the subject.

"The weight of the evidence showing that most humans are exposed to bisphenol A is very convincing," said Dr. Laura Vandenberg, PhD Forsyth Institute, Harvard Medical School. "Many studies have shown that exposure of rodents to similar levels causes significant changes in their brains, reproductive tracts, and mammary tissue. In fact, rodents exposed to low levels of bisphenol A early in life have an increased risk of developing certain cancers in adulthood. Experts in this field are now highly concerned about similar alterations occurring in exposed human fetuses and neonates."

Like bisphenol A, phthalates have been shown to disrupt hormone systems, and have been linked with some cancers, respiratory problems, and reproductive impacts. Just this month, the governor of Washington State signed the strictest toxic toy law in the nation, safeguarding Washington's children from phthalates, lead, and cadmium in their products. Connecticut children deserve the same protections, and advocates and health professionals alike are pressing for meaningful progress this year.

The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT is a growing alliance of over two dozen organizations—health, labor, scientific, environmental, faith and community groups—working to prevent harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals.

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