

Coalition seeks to end toxicity in children's products

**By Kitty LeShay - ReminderNews
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Susan Eastwood, director of communications for the Coalition for a Safe and Health Connecticut and for Clean Water Action, gave a presentation about the organization's goals at Stafford Public Library on April 7. Photo by Kitty LeShay.

Since 2007, the members of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut have been working tirelessly to raise awareness of dangerous chemicals in products used by children. The last of these informational meetings before the bills would be voted on in committee in the state House and Senate was presented at the Stafford Public Library on April 7 by Susan Eastwood, the group's communications director. The event was sponsored by the Stafford Grange and featured the showing of a short film called "Contaminated without Consent."



Eastwood quoted the preface of Siddhartha Mukherjee's Pulitzer Prize-winning book, "The Emperor of Maladies." One of every two men and one of three women will get cancer, she said. Anne Hulick, the coordinator, commented on the reasons. "More and more evidence points to serious health impacts as a result of exposure to toxic chemicals in everyday products," she said. "These products are found on our store shelves and have been linked to cancer, impaired brain development, and hormone disruption. We need to take action now to protect our future generations."

Action fell short in the House earlier in the day, when Bill 5354 did not pass out of the Public Health Committee. Senate Bill 126, sponsored by state Sen. Tony Guglielmo (R-35) and many other senators, has the same goal of working with the Connecticut Department of Public Health to make recommendations on ways to take toxic chemicals out of products. This bill will be voted on by the Senate in the near future.

The bill requires that toxicologists at the Department of Public Health provide a periodic report to the legislators about chemicals that are of high concern in children's products.

States across the United States are working on making products safer for their citizens. Legislation at the federal level is elusive, and with some states opposing government regulation, the most successful path is through the state governments. "It is important that parents know what is in these products," Eastwood said.

The European Union has regulated more than 1,100 chemicals of concern in consumer goods, compared to five at the federal level. It is a patchwork of regulation throughout the 50 states. "We need to get on the bandwagon in order to compete in world markets. Our products need to meet the safety standard of the people we want to sell to, and morally, government needs to protect our children," Eastwood said.

Members of the audience asked about what they could do. The answer, they were told, is to research what is in products purchased; a time-consuming task. Write your legislators, attend rallies and write letters to the editors, Eastwood said. In a democracy, the loudest voices often get heard. Making sure the vote gets to the Senate floor is important. “Who wants to be on record as being opposed to banning toxins dangerous to children?” Eastwood asked.

Many in the audience were Grange members. “I’m interested in this issue. I’ve tried to protect my kids through online advocacy. We support community-based agriculture where we buy our food. It is local and organic practices are used,” Tannis Longmore said.

For more information, visit www.safehealthct.org or follow them on Facebook or Twitter.