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COALITION RELEASES RESULTS OF NEW STUDY FINDING TOXIC CANCER-CAUSING CHEMICALS IN COUCHES, HOMES “Yet another reason why CT needs toxic chemical reform bill”

Hartford – Calling the results “yet another reason why Connecticut citizens deserve meaningful toxic chemical reform legislation this year,” Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut Coordinator Anne Hulick, RN, MS, JD referred to the results of a study released today from Duke University that found Chlorinated Tris, a chemical voluntarily removed by manufacturers from children’s pajamas more than 30 years ago because of its associated risk to cancer, and phosphate-based toxic chemicals in 39% of the samples collected from over 100 couches nationwide.

The study, which was published in *Environmental Science & Technology*, gathered 102 foam samples from around the nation and tested for chemicals added as flame-retardants. The study found that:

- 85% of the samples tested contained toxic or untested flame retardant chemicals
- Consumers have no way of knowing whether flame retardants are in their furniture – 64% of couches without a California TB 117 label contained chemicals
- It appears that the use of flame-retardants in furniture is on the rise. Of the couches purchased in the last 7 years, 94% contained toxic chemicals added as flame-retardants.

Hulick pointed out that one of the samples was from Connecticut resident, nurse and breast cancer survivor, **Beka Apostolidis, RN, MS**.

“The evidence keeps adding up to the already significant amount of peer-reviewed research that links exposure to toxic chemicals with cancers, diabetes, learning disabilities and reproductive disorders. As a nurse, educator and cancer survivor, I believe we have an obligation to take precautionary measures and reduce exposure to toxic chemicals-particularly for children,” said **Apostolidis**.

“As a Registered Nurse, former volunteer firefighter, and parent, I am concerned of the dangers of flame-retardants in our homes. According to the NFPA most fire deaths are not caused by burns, but by smoke inhalation,” said **Jose Perez, RN, Connecticut Health Care Associates Executive Secretary**. “Often smoke incapacitates so quickly that people are overcome and can’t make it to an

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otherwise accessible exit. The synthetic materials commonplace in today's homes produce especially dangerous substances, such as carbon monoxide (CO), which can be deadly, even in small quantities, as it replaced oxygen in the bloodstream. Hydrogen cyanide results from the burning of plastics, such as PVC pipe, and interferes with cellular respiration. Phosgene is formed when household products, such as vinyl materials, are burned. Even at low levels, phosgene can cause itchy eyes and a sore throat; at higher levels it can cause pulmonary edema and death (NFPA 2012). Fire fighters wear Self Contained Breathing Apparatus to protect them from these dangerous toxins while they put their lives on the line for us. Legislation needs to be passed to protect us from such dangerous chemicals."

Added **Hulick**, "When you realize that these flame retardants have been shown to have very little benefit in preventing injury from fire and add the risks associated with continued exposure, there is absolutely no reason to have these products on the market and in our couches— except to help the chemical companies' bottom line. I look forward to working with lawmakers to protect consumers from health risks associated with toxic chemicals in consumer products."

Hulick said that the Coalition will support legislation next Session to protect consumers – specifically children – from the dangers of these chemicals. She added that she's optimistic that legislation that wasn't approved last year addressing fire retardants in children's products and chemicals of concern to children will resurface again this year and she predicted it will have even stronger support given the Chicago Tribune series published last June that brought to light the many dishonest tactics used by chemical industry officials when testifying before legislators nationwide. The series resulted in a Senate hearing, an investigation by the Environmental Protection Agency and prompted the head of the Consumer Product Safety Commission to call for an expedited process in order to remove hazardous flame-retardants from new furniture.

"Health care costs are skyrocketing and yet we allow these pernicious, toxic chemicals that have horrible long term consequences to continue to impact our children and our families. It is past time to take action. The evidence is in and it is clear--these chemicals are incredibly harmful and need to be banned from children's products," said **State Representative Diana Urban (D-North Stonington)**.

The **Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut** is made up of over 50 organizations representing health professionals, workers, nurses, businesses, environmentalists, occupational safety advocates, people of faith, and individuals whose health has been impacted by toxic chemicals.

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