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News Release

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Report available at: www.saferchemicals.org

MOVING BEYOND TOXIC CHEMICAL "WHAC-A-MOLE"

A preventive approach to chemicals management would make us healthier, wealthier

HARTFORD – Evidence is strong and growing that chemical exposures contribute significantly to the rise in many chronic diseases, according to a new report synthesizing peer-reviewed science released today. "[The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act](#)" finds that Americans would be healthier if exposure to toxic chemicals was reduced. As Congress debates the costs of health care and its reform, the report vividly illustrates the opportunity to prevent disease and reduce health care costs by overhauling state and federal chemical policies.

"The Health Case" documents the enormous health care costs of treating cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, asthma and other diseases and conditions linked to chemical exposure, according to recent studies. The report shows that if a new health-based legislative framework to safely regulate chemicals yields even a 0.1 percent decrease in the incidence of chronic diseases—a very conservative estimate—direct medical savings in Connecticut would exceed \$50 million each year. National savings would be at least \$5 billion per year.

"There is a growing body of scientific evidence linking toxic chemicals to the development of childhood leukemia, learning disabilities, adverse pregnancy outcomes and reproductive disorders, and other health problems," said **John Meyer, MD, MPH, Associate Professor in Occupational/Environmental Health at the University of Connecticut Health Center.**

"Prevention of these exposures should begin with strong chemical management policies that will ultimately reduce the use of toxins that can harm human health. We need to implement programs and policies that eliminate toxic exposures, so that we are not in the unfortunate position of having to cope with the damage done, which in many cases can't be reversed once the exposure has happened."

The primary federal law governing chemical safety is the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which has never been significantly amended since its adoption in 1976. While Congress has begun to hold hearings on updates to TSCA, the real action has been taking place at the state level.

"Much attention has focused on single-chemical phase-outs such as Connecticut's landmark Bisphenol-A legislation of 2009, but states are increasingly pursuing more proactive approaches that can protect consumers from more than one chemical at a time," said **Sarah Uhl of Clean Water Action**. "By following the lead of California, Maine, and Washington, we can model what needs to be done federally and protect the health of Connecticut residents at the same time."

The co-chair of the legislature's Environment Committee agreed with advocates' assessment. "Connecticut can lead the way toward more health-protective laws by modeling the changes we hope will someday be adopted federally," said **State Representative Richard Roy, D-Milford**.

Over the last 30 years, tens of thousands of peer reviewed studies have built a large body of evidence demonstrating that chemical exposure can cause and contribute to some of our nation's most serious health problems — from childhood cancer to infertility.

Leukemia and other childhood cancers have increased by more than 20 percent since 1975. A woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is now one in eight, up from one in ten in 1973. Infertility affected 40 percent more women in 2002 than in 1982. The once-rare birth defect of undescended testicles in baby boys increased 200% between 1970 and 1993. Since the early 1990s, reported cases of autism spectrum disorder have increased tenfold.

"The secondary costs of not addressing the chemicals of concern are huge," said **State Representative Diana Urban, D-North Stonington**, who has over two decades of experience as an economics and political science professor. "The \$56 million just scratches the surface."

Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut 2010 Legislative Priorities:

An Act Concerning Child Safe Products

- Clarify the process by which state government identifies toxins in children's products
- Create a timeline for phasing these chemicals out of children's products when alternatives exist

An Act Promoting Safe Workplaces and Clean Technologies

- The bill would establish the board of directors and mission of a Chemical Innovations Institute. Once adequate federal and/or private dollars were raised, the Institute would provide in-state businesses with new information about chemicals of concern, safer alternatives, and emerging chemicals regulations. It could also assist state agencies with chemicals management. The Institute would help businesses comply with new chemical regulations, thus saving and potentially attracting new, green jobs to the state.

The full report, additional quotes and state-based economic information is available at www.saferchemicals.org

The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT is a growing alliance of over 50 organizations—health, labor, scientific, environmental, faith and community groups—working to prevent harm to human health and the environment from toxic chemicals. <http://www.safehealthyct.org>

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