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Legislature Approves Lead Reductions
Child Health Advocates Laud Critical Step to Protect Children from Toxins

Hartford— On Tuesday evening, the Connecticut State Senate unanimously approved House Bill 5650 to safeguard children from lead and asbestos added to their products, including toys. The bill now heads to the Governor's desk, where it is expected to be signed. This action comes on the heels of heightened public awareness of the problem of toxins in everyday products, and the need for states to lead the way on modernized chemical safety policies. If signed into law, the new measure will reduce the amount of lead allowed in children's products sold or manufactured in the state to 300ppm by July 1, 2009, and to no more than 100ppm by July 1, 2011. Paint used on children's products will need to meet a 90ppm standard by July 1, 2009, and asbestos will become illegal for use in children's products.

The bill also sets in motion a process for identifying additional hazardous substances in products for children, and corresponding safer alternatives.

"Connecticut legislators are to be congratulated for acting to reduce childhood lead exposures and for passing legislation that requires our state agencies to compile a list of substances of concern in children's products and safer alternatives," said **Annamarie Beaulieu**, MPH, Campaign Director for the Connecticut Public Health Association. *"Connecticut is now among other leading states such as Washington and Maine that are proactively working to reduce unnecessary childhood exposures to dangerous chemicals."*

With many states working to reform their chemicals regulations, a notable component of the bill will ensure that Connecticut has the ability to be a founding member of an emerging chemicals clearinghouse: an information hub that advocates anticipate will streamline the listing process.

"The multi-state clearinghouse on safer alternatives will enable states to share information and work together where the federal government has fallen behind," said **Senator Bob Duff**, D, Norwalk. *"Together we can collect the information needed to ensure that the safest materials and processes are being used."*

While HB 5650 represents a strong first step toward safe children's products, additional provisions are needed to reduce exposure to hormone disruptors, which the federal government has failed to regulate.

"As the European Union and other parts of the world surpass the U.S. on chemical safety regulations, Connecticut needs comprehensive new laws to ensure that our state does not become a dumping ground for toxic products that other countries don't allow to be sold," said **Sarah Uhl**, who works for Clean Water Action to coordinate the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut.

"Now that the science has been allowed to emerge, as legislators we have a responsibility to take immediate action to phase out bisphenol A and phthalates from common everyday products like food and beverage containers," said **State Representative Beth Bye, D, West Hartford**, who has been championing comprehensive legislation to protect children from toxic substances.

"The importance of lead reductions cannot be overstated, but additional protections from hormone disruptors are critical for pregnant women and young children who are particularly vulnerable and getting unnecessary daily exposures through common, everyday products," said **Mark Mitchell**, MD, MPH, president of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice.

HB 5650 largely mirrors actions on lead being voluntarily adopted by major toy retailers like Wal-Mart and Toys "R" Us. These and other major retailers have also committed to end their use of phthalates in children's products, and stop selling baby bottles that contain bisphenol A.

"With other states and major retailers moving forward with strict toy safety standards, we need to ensure that we enact comprehensive legislation to protect all Connecticut residents," said **Phil Sherwood**, legislative director for the **Connecticut Citizen Action Group**. *"Federal legislation able to solve this problem is far from passing, so Connecticut needs to stand up to the special interests bent on continuing to sell unnecessary toxic ingredients- and toxic products- to the Connecticut market."*

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.