

Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT
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No More Toxic Toys

Diverse Public Health Coalition Works to Overcome Chemical Lobby

Hartford— Health professionals, workers, parents, environmentalists, and state officials gathered on the north steps of the state capitol to voice support for HB 5601 An Act Banning Children's Products Containing Lead, Phthalates or Bisphenol-A. Also on hand at the event was a 25' phthalate-free ducky designed to draw attention to one of America's favorite toys that can contain phthalates. The ducky was donated by the **Center for Health, Environment & Justice** and has made recent appearances in Maine and Washington as well.

The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut is calling on the legislature and Governor Rell to pass HB 5601, legislation designed to protect children by reducing their exposure to unnecessary toxic substances. In addition to lead, HB 5601 would phase out two hormone disrupting chemicals, bisphenol-A and phthalates, which are commonly found in children's products including: baby bottles, sippy cups, teething rings, toys, infant formula can linings and more.

"By ensuring that toys with toxic substances such as lead, phthalates, and Bisphenol-A are not produced or sold in Connecticut, we will help to prevent exposures to these toxic chemicals." said **Mark Mitchell, M.D., MPH, President of the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice.**

Following numerous recalls of children's toys, a groundswell of public support for safer products has fueled this new legislation and Connecticut is not the only state considering children's products legislation this session. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed legislation this past fall to phase out phthalates in children's products. And just last week, Washington State approved legislation to phase out phthalates and other substances of concern from children's products.

"States are taking action because *safer products exist*," said **Sarah Uhl, Coordinator of the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy CT.** "Rubber duckies in Europe, for example, do not contain phthalates. There are baby bottles currently on the market that do not contain bisphenol-A."

"With the weight of the evidence indicating that these chemicals are hazardous for children, we should be requiring companies to use available safer alternatives," said **Polly Barey, MS, RN, of the CT Nurses' Association.** "We need to ensure that the legacy we leave for the next generation does not prevent them from reaching their full potential."

"The intentional introduction of toxic substances into our environment and our lives is a significant issue for the environment community, so we are pleased to be an active member of the Coalition," said **Martin Mador, Legislative and Political Chair for the Connecticut chapter of the Sierra Club.**

With a broken federal system unable to keep chemicals of concern out of commerce, states are left to take action themselves. *HB 5601 recently passed through the Environment Committee fully intact* and the Coalition commends co-chairs Senator Ed Meyer and Representative Richard Roy and the members of the committee who voted in favor for recognizing the importance of this legislation.

“We took an important step by passing a strong bill out of the Environment Committee,” said **State Representative Richard Roy, D Milford**. “Lead is only a small piece of the problem, and we would be smart to follow the lead of Washington and California in phasing out phthalates and other substances of concern.”

Legislative leaders from around that state agree. “Not only does this legislation send a strong message to toy and children’s products manufacturers that Connecticut does not want to become a dumping ground for toxic toys, it also addresses the need to switch to alternatives to toxic chemicals,” said **Senator Bob Duff, D Norwalk**. “By creating an Innovations Institute to assess in-state chemical use and work with states in the region on safer alternatives, we can position our state as a global leader on safe products and manufacturing.”

“This legislation is win-win-win,” said **Martha Kelly, a Labor Advocate for the CT Council on Occupational Safety & Health**. “It’s good for the health of our children, it’s good for our workers and communities, and ultimately it will reduce healthcare costs and push our economy toward more sustainable green jobs.”

On the losing side of the equation are a handful of out-of-state big chemical companies that stand to profit from the continued production of these toxic substances. Under the auspices of the American Chemistry Council and the Toy Industry Association, these companies have hired prominent lobbying firms to work against the proposed legislation. These companies include ExxonMobil Chemical Company, Ferro Corporation, Eastman Chemical Company, BASF, and others represented by the American Chemistry Council, as well as toy companies bent on selling cheap 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.