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CHEMICAL REFORM LEGISLATION INTRODUCED IN D.C. TAKES CUE FROM CONNECTICUT TO PROTECT CITIZENS FROM TOXICS “Safe Chemicals Act of 2011” Introduced in Senate

Signaling their clear intention to protect families from toxic chemicals linked to serious health problems, Senator Frank Lautenberg, Barbara Boxer, Amy Klobuchar, Charles Schumer and others today introduced the [“Safe Chemicals Act”](#) to upgrade America’s outdated system for managing chemical safety. The legislation builds on the momentum from 18 states, including Connecticut, that have passed laws to address health hazards from chemicals such as bisphenol A, lead, and toxic flame retardants.

“Families shouldn’t have to guess whether the baby bottle they give their child or the carpet they put in their homes will make them sick. Fortunately the Safe Chemicals Act will help fill the gap in the nation’s chemical safety laws that currently allow harmful chemicals into our homes in the products we use everyday,” said Ivy Sager-Rosenthal, campaign director for the Washington Toxics Coalition.

State legislation on toxic chemicals, as well as consumer demand for safer products has already led to a wave of new state chemical laws across the country with Connecticut being a national leader. Lawmakers in Connecticut passed legislation to ban lead in children's toys, cadmium in children’s jewelry and passed the strongest ban on Bisphenol-A (BPA) in the country. Connecticut continues to work towards developing a framework for comprehensive reforms to ban the most toxic chemicals from products. Similar laws have been passed or are pending in states across the country including Maine, California, New York, Oregon, Minnesota, Washington, Massachusetts and New York.

“From toxic toys to toxic flame retardants, Washington state policymakers, in an overwhelmingly bipartisan fashion, have supported groundbreaking laws to protect citizens from toxic chemicals. We call on the Connecticut Congressional Delegation to follow suit and support this bill,” said Sager-Rosenthal

The Safe Chemicals Act would overhaul the 35-year-old Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which is widely perceived to have failed to protect public health and the environment. Specifically the Act would:

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- Require EPA to identify and restrict the “worst of the worst” chemicals, those that persist and build up in the food chain;
- Require basic health and safety information for all chemicals as a condition for entering or remaining on the market;
- Reduce the burden of toxic chemical exposures on people of color and low-income and indigenous communities;
- Upgrade scientific methods for testing and evaluating chemicals to reflect best practices called for by the National Academy of Sciences; and
- Generally provide EPA with the tools and resources it needs to identify and address chemicals posing health and environmental concerns.

“The whole world has woken up to the ragged holes in our federal safety net for chemicals,” said Andy Igrejas, Director of *Safer Chemicals, Health Families*, a coalition of 280 health, environmental and business groups, and of which the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut is a member. “We need a new law to put commonsense limits on toxic chemicals both to protect American families, and to give a leg up to American firms in a world market that increasingly demands safer products.”

The Act also responds to increasingly forceful warnings from scientific and medical experts -- including the President’s Cancer Panel -- that current policies have failed to curtail common chemicals linked to diseases such as cancer, learning disabilities, infertility, and more. In addition to recent state laws, numerous corporate policies of major American companies restricting toxic chemicals, including Staples, SC Johnson, Wal-Mart and Kaiser Permanente.

Passed in 1976, TSCA’s presumption that chemicals should be considered innocent until proven guilty was a sharp departure from the approach taken with pharmaceuticals and pesticides. Since then, an overwhelming body of science has shown that presumption to be unfounded. Published studies in peer-reviewed journals have shown many common chemicals can cause chronic diseases and can be toxic even at low doses.

Once thought to pose little likelihood of exposure, we now know many chemicals migrate from the materials and products in which they’re used – including furniture, plastics and food cans – into our bodies. The federal Centers for Disease Control has found that the blood or tissues of almost every American carry hundreds of these chemicals, some present even before birth. Yet under TSCA, EPA cannot restrict even the most dangerous of these chemicals and lacks the information it needs to evaluate how this complex mixture of chemicals affects our health. EPA has been able to require testing of only a few hundred of the 62,000 chemicals that have been on the market since TSCA was passed 35 years ago, a number that has increased to 85,000 chemicals today.

“The science on the links between chemicals and cancer is clear and more widely accepted than ever before,” said Nancy Buermeyer of the Breast Cancer Fund, a national advocacy organization that focuses on prevention. “Still, every day millions of families are coping with the devastation of cancer diagnoses. We must protect the public’s health from dangerous or untested chemicals, and there’s no time to wait. Congress should act now on chemical policy reform.”

"This proposed TSCA reform would enable EPA to swiftly address chemicals that we know can harm babies' developing brains, and require testing of chemicals for safety before they go into products," said Maureen Swanson of the Learning Disabilities Association. At a time when we face increasing rates of autism and ADHD, parents and expectant parents shouldn't have to worry that the products they buy might contain chemicals that can interfere with brain development and learning."

Advocates predict action in this Congress despite the partisan divide. They point to support from many businesses for reform of TSCA, including major chemical and consumer product companies such as Dow, BASF, and Procter & Gamble. They also point to the strong bipartisan support for chemical safety legislation at the state level, and public opinion research that consistently shows overwhelming bipartisan support for reform.

The Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut (CSHC) is a statewide non-profit advocacy group that works to eliminate sources of toxic chemicals and is made up of over 50 organizations representing healthy professionals, workers, nurses, businesses, environmentalists, occupational safety advocates, people of faith, and individuals whose health has been impacted by toxic chemicals. For more information visit CSHC on the web at www.safehealthyct.org; on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/group.php?gid=64504982793>; and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/#!/safehealthyct>.

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