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ADVOCATES HAVE BIG FIGHT AHEAD As Toy Industry Association leads effort to keep toxics in children's toys

HARTFORD – Advocates, parents, health care professionals and concerned citizens across the state are working around the clock to get word to Connecticut lawmakers that action needs to be taken to protect children from toxic chemical exposure. Armed with numerous peer-based scientific studies, they argue that a strong link has been demonstrated between exposure to toxic chemicals – such as Bisphenol-A and others - and serious health risks, particularly in children and infants whose bodies are still developing and therefore more vulnerable to the toxins.

Their opponents, the Toy Industry Association, are working just as hard to kill **Senate Bill 274 – An Act Concerning Chemicals of Concern to Children** as it would according to Anne Hulick RN, MS, JD, who is Coordinator for the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut, “Be a step forward to putting into place a process for identifying the most egregious chemicals used in children’s products.”

Mark A. Mitchell, MD, MPH, disputed claims by Industry Toy and Chemical Lobbyists that the bill will have no public health benefit. **Dr. Mitchell** is Founder and Senior Policy Advisor for Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice and works actively on the Federal level on behalf of the National Medical Association representing 40,000 African-American physicians and their patients, and Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families Campaign, a coalition of more than 300 organizations representing 11 million people.

“As the previous Director of the Hartford Health Department, I became interested in environmental health because so many of the diseases that are increasing – especially those that contribute to health disparities in low-income people and people of color, are associated with environmental exposures – the very exposures that this bill aims to reduce,” said **Dr. Mitchell**.

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He went on to specifically address Toy Industry lobbyist claims that a law passed in 2010 that created a Chemical Innovations Institute already protects Connecticut citizens. ***“The Chemical Innovations Institute (CII) was never supposed to be involved in policymaking, in fact the Connecticut Business and Industry Association, which was instrumental in creating the CII, was adamant that the Institute be specifically a resource for businesses seeking information on how to switch to safer chemicals.”***

“There is no absolutely language in PA-164 (which created the Chemical Innovations Institute) that creates a process to study policies put in place in other states to reduce the public’s exposure to toxic chemicals, and more importantly to report it’s findings back to the Legislature,” said **Dr. Mitchell**. “We are hopeful that once the Institute becomes funded it will become a valuable resource for businesses choosing to transition to safer chemicals.”

But **Dr. Mitchell** added that it would be both unrealistic and imprudent to expect that all Connecticut businesses will voluntarily seek out guidance from the Institute. ***Senate Bill 274 fills a necessary gap by examining what other states are doing successful with chemicals of concern to children, setting up a process for reducing exposure to the most harmful chemicals and working collaboratively with the CII to find safer alternatives.”***

“As soon as we become parents, our first and foremost responsibility is to protect our children,” said **Hacah Boros RN, MSN**. “We certainly wouldn’t allow our kids to play in a pile of asbestos – this is absolutely no different. There are chemicals used in the manufacturing of popular toys that are associated with serious health risks like cancer, asthma, and autism and we’re up against an organization with annual budget of \$16 million. In my opinion, investing that amount into making toys safer for our kids would be a much more responsible use of funds.”

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