

The Connecticut General Assembly



For IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2016

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Rep. Urban, Sen. Bartolomeo Champion Flame Retardants Ban

Bill would remove toxic chemicals from children's products

Committee on Children Co-Chairs, Representative Diana Urban (D-Stonington) and **Senator Danté Bartolomeo** (D-Meriden) held a press conference today in support of a bill that would ban the sale of children's products containing certain toxic flame retardant chemicals.

They were joined by a former firefighter and environmental advocates who voiced their support for HB 5299, An Act Concerning Toxic Flame Retardant Chemicals in Children's Products and Upholstered Residential Furniture.

"Flame retardants offer the worst of two worlds: they don't work and they are carcinogenic as well as endocrine disrupters. We know that researchers are finding metabolites of these toxic chemicals in our children and it is high time we banned them," said **Rep. Urban**. "Our children have the highest risk of exposure because they play on the ground where these toxins exist in house dust, are exposed in utero, and tend to put things in their mouths."

TRIS, a flame retardant, was removed from children's pajamas in the seventies due to concerns about toxicity and yet it has shown up again in bassinets, nursing pillows, changing tables, and a multitude of children's products. It is also in 89% of couches tested countrywide. One study found that out of 43 children tested, flame retardants were present in the urine of 40.

"Science is on our side, and public opinion is on our side – children, parents, firefighters, retired senior citizens, scientists and environmentalists. This measure passed our committee on a unanimous and bipartisan basis. The only faction that opposes it are the

chemical companies that have other, better options available to them but who simply do not have the desire to change the way they do business,” said **Sen. Bartolomeo**, a longtime advocate of removing harmful and cancer-causing chemicals from children’s clothing and other household goods. “With this bill, the Children’s Committee and this legislature are poised to make Connecticut one of the first states in the nation to put the health and safety of our children and our residents first.”

According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, firefighters have higher rates of cancer than the general population. Flame retardants have been linked to certain types of cancers, reproductive disorders, learning and behavioral disorders, and thyroid problems.

“The Chicago Tribune did an investigative report called ‘Playing with Fire’ that exposed the deceptive tactics of the chemical industry to hide the toxic nature of these chemicals. This included providing false testimony on burn victims from a doctor who subsequently surrendered his medical license,” said **Rep. Urban**. “We know these chemicals do not belong in children's products or anywhere near children as their developing bodies make them highly vulnerable to the impact of these toxins. These impacts can range from causing cancer to disrupting hormones that are vital during the early stages of a child's development.”

“As a former legislator and firefighter, I fully appreciate the initial intent of lawmakers to protect people from fire,” said Dennis Ozment, former Minnesota state representative. “However, we must take into account the risks and benefits of certain classes of flame retardants. Flame retardants are producing twice the smoke and seven times the carbon monoxide of non-treated furniture. This toxic soup is what makes it harder for people to escape burning buildings, and more dangerous for everyone who breathes in these fumes.”

“State legislators from across the country are taking steps to protect children and families from exposure to toxic chemicals, including those added to consumer products as flame retardants,” said Jeff Mauk, Executive Director of the National Caucus of Environmental Legislators. “These states, from North Carolina to Alaska to Connecticut, are working on this issue because they feel they cannot wait for the federal government to take action.”

Currently, 13 states are actively considering bans on flame retardants. Minnesota passed a ban just last year.

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