

Maryland PIRG
Clean Water Action
Center for Health, Environment and Justice

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
March 6, 2007

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**Health and Environmental Leaders Testify at Hearing on Bill to Ban
Unnecessary Dangerous Chemicals Found in Baby Bottles, Children's
Toys, and Cosmetics**

***New Report Finds Toxic Chemicals in Toys, Baby Bottles, and
Cosmetics Can Harm the Reproductive System***

(Annapolis, MD) Today health and environmental leaders testified in Annapolis at a Health and Government Operations committee hearing in support of House Bill 833 introduced by Delegate James Hubbard, a bill that would ban phthalates and bisphenol A from children's toys, baby products, and cosmetics. At the hearing, a new report summarizing the health and environmental hazards of these unnecessary toxic chemicals found in our homes, was released. The report, titled "**Public Health Concerns - Phthalates and Bisphenol A**", was developed at the request of the Health and Government Operations Committee of the Maryland General Assembly and written by specialists at the Environmental Health Education Center of the University of Maryland School of Nursing. The authors reported that laboratory studies have demonstrated that certain phthalate compounds and Bisphenol A – chemicals that are commonly used in the manufacture of plastics – can disrupt hormone function, creating the potential for altered growth, development, and reproduction. Alterations in hormone function can have wide-ranging effects. Numerous laboratory animal studies have correlated exposure to certain phthalates (e.g., diethyl hexyl phthalate, dibutyl phthalate, and butyl benzyl phthalate) and Bisphenol A with developmental abnormalities leading to decreased fertility (phthalates), or chronic disease (Bisphenol A). There is also evidence for widespread low-level exposure to these compounds within the human population.

"Parents cannot be expected to deal with these issues on their own," **said Johanna Neumann, Maryland PIRG policy advocate.** "Maryland must act to assist parents and ensure that products on the market are not potentially harmful for children."

"Maryland should require manufacturers to phase out toxic chemicals from children's products," **said Andrew Fellows, Chesapeake Program Director of Clean Water Action.** "In the meantime, parents have the right to know toxic chemical content information to make informed purchasing decisions right away."

"Sucking on some children's PVC toys is like sucking on a toxic lollipop," said **Michael Schade, PVC Campaign Coordinator with the Center for Health, Environment and Justice**. "Many of these unnecessary poisonous chemicals have already been banned from use in toys in Europe, but they're still sold here in the U.S. Safe and cost effective alternatives exist and responsible companies are phasing them out."

"No one is minding the store when it comes to protecting consumers from toxic chemicals in their cosmetics," said **Janet Nudelman, Coordinator of the Campaign for Safe Cosmetics**. "Hat's off to Maryland legislators for putting public health above profits and taking on the regulatory authority that is clearly lacking at the federal level."

House Bill 833 would prohibit the manufacture, sale or distribution of certain toys or child care articles containing phthalates or bisphenol A. The bill would also prohibit the manufacture, sale, or distribution of cosmetics containing certain phthalates. The bill would require companies to use the least toxic alternative when replacing these harmful chemicals, avoiding chemicals that are known, probable, or possible human carcinogens or reproductive toxicants. Companies would have until January 1, 2009 to switch to safer alternatives.

Similar bills to ban these chemicals have been introduced in the past year in New York, California, and Minnesota. In June 2006, San Francisco became the first jurisdiction in the United States to pass a prohibition on the use of phthalates and bisphenol A in toys and child care articles. Phthalates have already been banned from toys in the European Union. Some leading toy manufacturers, such as First Years, Fisher Price, Gerber, Lego Systems, Mattel, and Tyco have already begun to take the responsible path and phase out phthalates in certain toys. More than 500 cosmetics and body care products companies have promised to eliminate toxic ingredients such as phthalates from their products worldwide.

Phthalates: Phthalates are chemical substances that make PVC plastic soft and flexible. They are widely used in products such as vinyl shower curtains and cosmetics. They are also used in soft plastic toys and other baby products, such as teething rings and rattles. Phthalates can leach out of plastic over time. Children, who have a natural tendency to suck on objects and put things in their mouths, are particularly vulnerable to phthalates. Studies have demonstrated that phthalates such as DINP pose hazards in animals which raises concerns for infants and young children chewing on PVC toys. Studies have demonstrated links between DINP and cancer, adverse impacts on the reproductive system, kidneys, liver, and blood.

Bisphenol A: Bisphenol A is most commonly used to make clear polycarbonate plastic for consumer products, such as baby bottles. Through use, this plastic breaks down and leaches bisphenol A into liquids and food to which it comes into contact. Scientists have linked very low doses of bisphenol A exposure to cancers, impaired immune function, early onset of puberty, obesity, diabetes, and hyperactivity, among other problems.

Others submitting statements in support of the legislation today include Born Free, Breast Cancer Fund, Campaign for Safe Cosmetics, the Center for Health, Environment and Justice, Learning Disabilities Association of Maryland, and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

ATTENTION REPORTERS - Copies of the new report, "*Public Health Concerns - Phthalates and Bisphenol A*", and testimony submitted at today's hearing are available by contacting Mike Schade at 212-964-3680 or mike@besafenet.com