



## Written Rebuttal Testimony of Dr. J. Mijin Cha on behalf of the Progressive States Network before the Rhode Island Health Education and Welfare Committee

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Mijin Cha and I am a senior policy specialist at the Progressive States Network. It was a pleasure for me to address the Committee on March 12 at the initial hearing for HB 7098 and HB 7812, which work together to protect children from toxic toys and products. The purpose of this letter is to clarify a few points that arose after my testimony. In particular, there are three points that I would like to address: recent state efforts, the danger of phthalates and recent EU activity on the issue.

### Recent State Efforts

As detailed in the New York Times and several other news outlets,<sup>1</sup> 29 states have pursued legislation on toy safety. Of these, 20 states have taken steps to ban four toxins used in toy manufacturing: lead, phthalates, bisphenol-a, and cadmium. **Washington** state's Governor just signed its toxic toys legislation into law on April 1. Washington joins **California** in banning phthalates from children's toys.

**Michigan** passed a law last December that ban all toxins in toys. **Minnesota, Vermont, Illinois, Tennessee,** and **Connecticut** also have legislation pending that, like HB 7812, would ban one or more specific toxins in children's toys and products.

Other states, like **Alaska, Missouri, Indiana, South Carolina, Pennsylvania,** and **Florida** have introduced legislation that, like HB 7098, would require manufacturers to disclose toxins in products. Rhode Island legislators have the exciting opportunity to join these states and lead the effort to protect our children against toxic poisoning.

### Dangers of Phthalates

Contrary to opposition claims, the vast majority of scientific research concludes that phthalates are toxic. Studies done at the US EPA (Earl Gray) have shown that harm to the male reproductive tract for several forms of phthalates. Further, studies indicate that exposure to more than one phthalate, such as the ones banned in HB 7812, can have a cumulative effect that is larger than exposure to just one of the chemicals. A recent study published in *Toxicological Sciences*, found that the cumulative effects of DBP and DEHP, two of the toxins banned in HB 7812, altered fetal steroid hormones and genes. Therefore, it is essential that all six of the toxic phthalates be banned.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: *Washington State Debates Strict Bill on Child Products* at [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/us/01toys.html?\\_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&ref=us&adxnnlx=1207080161-U/GnxBwK2sM9wOi/eIKjqw](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/01/us/01toys.html?_r=1&adxnnl=1&oref=slogin&ref=us&adxnnlx=1207080161-U/GnxBwK2sM9wOi/eIKjqw), and *States Led Fed in Toys Safety* at <http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=296845>

### Recent EU Activity

The European Chemicals Bureau did release a report that minimized the risk of some of the phthalates banned in HB 7812. However, this report was contradictory to other EU and scientific, peer-reviewed studies. Moreover, this report was ***overturned*** by the EU Scientific Committee on Ecotoxicity and the Environment. The EU has upheld their ban on the same phthalates banned in HB 7812 due to overwhelming evidence that shows they are unsafe for children.

### Conclusion

When it comes to the health and well being of children, action must be *proactive* not reactive. There is already overwhelming evidence of the danger of these chemicals. Waiting until more children are injured, or even die, is in no one's interests. I strongly urge you to pass HB 7098 and 7812 and join the states leading the nation in protecting children from toxic toys and products.