



Written Testimony of Dr. J. Mijin Cha on behalf of the Progressive States Network
Before the Connecticut General Assembly Environment Committee

Dear Committee Members:

My name is Mijin Cha and I am a senior policy specialist at the Progressive States Network. The Progressive States Network is dedicated to working with state legislators to pass legislation that offers protections for consumers, working families, affordable health care, and a cleaner environment.

Starting last fall, we began a nationwide campaign to support efforts by local and national groups, such as the Washington Toxics Coalition and the United States Steelworkers, to ban toxics in toys and children's products to protect the most vulnerable segment of our society. Today, we submit testimony in support of Connecticut's Act Concerning Safe Toys. Connecticut has the exciting opportunity to lead the nation in eliminating toxics in toys and children's products and protecting those that cannot protect themselves and we fully support its efforts.

There is movement across the country to ban toxics in toys and children's products. Over half of the states have introduced, or are planning to introduce, legislation to protect children against toxics in toys and products. States like Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and Washington have all introduced bills to address this very serious issue.

The Connecticut bill before this committee is a combination of all the best elements in the bills that are being introduced across the country. This Act identifies lists of chemicals of high concern, requires safer alternatives to be used when available, and provides for participation in the multi-state clearinghouse for chemicals of high concern.

The Act then goes even one step further by providing seed funding for an "Innovations Institute" that helps identify chemicals of high concern and tests toys and children's articles for these chemicals. It also works with businesses in Connecticut to phase in safer alternatives in a way that does not make them less competitive.

The fact that states, like Nebraska and West Virginia, are introducing legislation similar to that introduced in Massachusetts and Michigan highlights the urgent need for state action in the absence of comprehensive federal reform. Connecticut legislators have the opportunity to really come out in the front of this issue and lead the nation. I strongly urge the legislature to take quick action on this bill and start protecting Connecticut's children.

Connecticut is no stranger to being a leader on environmental health concerns. The Act Concerning Safe Toys is one of the most comprehensive, forward looking bills to regulate toxics in toys and products and protect the most vulnerable class of citizens in the state and beyond. With this bill, the state of Connecticut will take the lead in protecting children against toxic toys and products.