



Written Testimony of Dr. J. Mijin Cha on behalf of the Progressive States Network
Before the Hawaii House of Representatives Consumer Protection and Commerce Committee
With Respect to HB 2449, *Protecting Children from Certain Toxic Products*

Dear Chairman Herkes and fellow 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 Hawaii's House Bill 2449, which protects children from toxic products by banning harmful toxics in children's products and requiring manufacturers to choose safer alternatives. Hawaii has the exciting opportunity to be one of the leaders in this fight to protect children from toxic and harmful products.

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.

HB 2449 is one of the strongest pieces of legislation being introduced. The bill bans the manufacture, sale, and distribution of products for children that contain bisphenol-A (BPA) or phthalates. According to a study published by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, exposure to BPA during early development disrupts hormonal growth and can also affect immune function and brain chemistry. The phthalates banned in HB 2449 have already been banned by not only the European Union, but also Japan, Mexico and Argentina.

The bill also requires manufacturers to use the last toxic alternative when replacing BPA and phthalates in children's products. This will ensure that children are continually protected from exposure to toxic toys.

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. Hawaii legislators have the opportunity to really take leadership on this issue. I strongly urge the legislature to take quick action on this bill and start protecting Hawaii's children.

Hawaii is no stranger to being a leader on environmental health concerns. HB 2449 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.