

Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow News Release

Legislation to Curb Toxic Chemicals Sent to Senate *Bill Will Prevent Illnesses by Calling for Safer Alternatives*

**For Immediate Release:
Monday, November 2, 2007**

Contact:

Elizabeth Saunders
617/338-8131 x 203
617/869-3937 (c)

Today the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture gave a "favorable report" to legislation that will protect public health by replacing toxic chemicals with safer alternatives. Supporters of *An Act for a Healthy Massachusetts: Safer Alternatives to Toxic Chemicals* (The Safer Alternatives Bill) applauded the committee's action as an important step towards passing the measure, which is designed to prevent diseases and disorders such as cancer, asthma, developmental or learning disabilities, infertility, diabetes and Parkinson's. The bill is next expected to go to the Senate Ways and Means Committee

A majority of legislators in both houses of the Massachusetts legislature are co-sponsoring the legislation, known as the Safer Alternatives bill, led by Representative Jay Kaufman (D-Lexington) and Senator Steven Tolman (D-Brighton). It is supported by the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow (AHT), a coalition over 150 organizations –health, labor, scientific, environmental, faith and community groups – working to promote the use of safer alternatives to toxic chemicals.

"Asking manufacturers to make greener, safer products is nothing extraordinary especially when proven effective alternatives to toxic chemicals exist," said Senator Pamela Resor (D-Acton), Co-Chair of the Environment Committee. "Massachusetts is poised to be the leader in the nation for promoting toxic substitution with the important research being done at the Toxic Use Reduction Institute (TURI) at UMass Lowell. If we can keep toxics out of everyday products, then we will be safe guarding the health of our environment and our children."

"I am eager to work for the bill's passage in the Senate," said Tolman. "This legislation will put Massachusetts at the forefront of responsible chemical policy and safeguard the residents of the Commonwealth from the very real and unseen dangers of toxic chemicals. These chemicals have, unfortunately, become a part of our everyday lives and have been proven to be the root cause of many of the health disorders affecting the people of this state."

"With rates of cancer and other illnesses linked to toxic chemicals rising dramatically and unnecessarily, the people of Massachusetts can't afford any delays in passing this

legislation,” said Erin Boles, Associate Executive Director of the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition. “We commend the chairs and members of the Environment Committee for taking a stand in support of protecting public health and we hope that the Senate will act quickly and bring the bill to a vote soon.”

The Safer Alternatives Bill will designate “Priority Toxic Chemicals” which are used in Massachusetts and are linked to chronic illnesses. It mandates a careful process to evaluate and then require safer alternatives to these chemicals where feasible. It will assist businesses in the transition and increase the competitiveness of Massachusetts businesses internationally.

“This bill is just common sense,” said Representative Frank Smizik (D-Brookline), Co-Chair of the Environment Committee. “Where there are safer alternatives to the toxic chemicals that we are currently putting in our products, we should be using them. This legislation will help keep our residents healthy, protect our manufacturers and retailers from unnecessary liability, and drive the sort of innovation that will create more, greener businesses here in the Commonwealth.”

In July 2005, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts funded the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (TURI) at UMass Lowell to study safer alternatives for major uses of five toxic chemicals. The study identified safer alternatives to major uses of the chemicals, including perchloroethylene, used in dry cleaning, Di (2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) in vinyl products like children’s toys, shower curtains and IV bags, and formaldehyde used in personal care products and building products.

Legislative sponsors and advocates from the Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow proposed the legislation as a response to the growing scientific indications that toxic chemicals are contributing to an epidemic of chronic diseases and disorders, including cancer, learning disabilities, asthma, and neurodegenerative diseases.

“This legislation is the result of some very hard work and collaborative effort by many individuals, of whom all had the common goal of protecting children and families from the scourge of toxic chemicals,” said Kaufman. “I am heartened to have finally reached the point where this bill, strongly supported in both chambers of the Legislature, will now be voted on by all my colleagues. If approved, this initiative will put the Commonwealth on a par with the European Union, who have taken the lead on consumer safety and environmental awareness.”

“The Safer Alternatives Bill is key legislation that will go a long way to protecting the health of children and adults in Massachusetts,” said Elizabeth Saunders, Campaign Organizer, for Clean Water Action. “The Alliance for a Healthy Tomorrow is looking forward to working with our allies in the Senate to bring the bill to the Senate floor this year.”