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February 22, 2011

Representative Kurt Olson and Members of the Committee  
House Labor and Commerce Committee  
State Capitol  
Juneau AK, 99801

Dear Chair Olson and Members of the House Labor and Commerce Committee:

The Arc of Anchorage is writing in support of HB 63, *"An Act relating to flame retardants and to the manufacture, sale, and distribution of products containing flame retardants; relating to bioaccumulative toxic chemicals; and providing for an effective date."* The Arc of Anchorage is a private not-for-profit organization that serves people with developmental disabilities and mental health issues so that they can lead rich and productive lives. The Arc looks forward to a day when it is no longer needed because all preventable disabilities have been prevented, but we need legislative help to address prevention.

Learning and developmental disabilities influence the quality of life for affected children and their families, and also impose a heavy financial burden on the state through required Special Education, increased healthcare costs, lost work time for parents, and a life-long loss of work productivity for severely affected children. Scientific evidence has demonstrated that some chemicals, including decaBDE, can cause learning and developmental disorders. We must not expose our children to toxicants that we know or suspect can harm their developing brains and bodies. We know that safe alternatives can replace the need for these toxic chemicals without compromising fire safety.

Developing children are more susceptible to toxic exposures than adults. When certain exposures occur at certain times, sometimes even at very low doses, the development of children's brains, other organs, and reproductive, hormonal, and immune systems can be permanently altered. Recent evidence has shown children who had higher cord blood concentrations of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) scored lower on tests of mental and motor development at 1-4 and 6 years of age.

PBDE residues, particularly highly brominated PBDEs such as deca-BDE, have been found consistently in tissue samples of both new mothers and their newborn infants, including in mothers' breast milk. This trend has been found to occur around the globe. Yupik women from the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta of Alaska have the highest known concentrations of PBDEs in human populations in the Arctic.

Children rely on adults to keep them safe from harm. Therefore, it is up to us to do everything we can to keep them safe and to minimize their exposures to toxics. HB 63 is important legislation that will help protect children from needless exposures to this persistent, toxic chemical.

Thank you,



Patti Saunders

Director of Development

The Arc of Anchorage