



Testimony in Support of the Toxic-Free Children's Act (SB 111/HB 199)

January 19, 2015
Alaska Legislature
Senate Labor & Commerce Committee
Senate Judiciary Committee
House Labor & Commerce Committee
House Finance Committee

Re: Support SB 111/HB199

The American Sustainable Business Council is pleased to submit this letter in support of the SB 111/HB 199, the Toxic-Free Children's Act.

The Council is a growing network of business organizations and companies, including businesses in Alaska, committed to advancing a policies and market forces that support a vibrant and sustainable economy, that provides economic as well as social and environmental benefit. Today, the organizations that have joined this partnership represent over 225,000 businesses.

ASBC believes that keeping toxic chemicals out of everyday household products, particularly those made for infants and children, makes good business sense. With appropriate government policies, laws, and regulations, there is even more potential to guide businesses, boost the economy while protecting the environment and public health.

Every week, new scientific research links exposure to chemicals commonly found in products to the increasing incidence of serious chronic health problems, including asthma, childhood cancers, infertility and learning and developmental disabilities. The uncertainty surrounding the safety of chemicals is eroding consumer confidence in a wide range of products.

Too often there are voices taking positions about that they say are "good for business" when their positions are at the expense of what's good for people and what's good for the natural environment. We at the ASBC believe that that is a false choice. A growing number of businesses of all sizes are making choices that are good for people and good for the environment *because* it is good for their financial bottom line and for the economy of Alaska.

Let me tell you about one example. Barry Cik is the founder and CEO of Naturepedic, a mattress manufacturer. He says, "Making products with chemical laden highly flammable ingredients, and then adding even more chemicals in the form of 'flame retardants', only provides a false sense of security. These flame retardant chemicals are less, not more, safe. They provide almost meaningless

protection, and instead only add to the toxic chemical burden.” In describing his business, Barry says “Naturepedic creates its products with safer, less flammable components to begin with. For example, organic cotton is nowhere near as flammable as other common filling and cushioning materials.”

Years ago, the most prevalent attitude was that if a product was on the shelf, it was safe because if it wasn't safe, the government wouldn't allow it to be sold. Today, people are realizing that this simply is not the case. Clarity in the marketplace is exactly what we can create with good legislation, such as SB 111/HB 199.

[ASBC commissioned polling of small businesses across sectors.](#) The polling found that 73 % of Small business owners overwhelmingly support reform that would strengthen chemical legislation.

The companies and the business organizations we represent make the choices for various reasons:

1. Our *customers* want products that don't expose them and their children to toxic chemicals. When people know that a product contains toxic chemicals, they often switch to products that contain less toxic or non-toxic ingredients.
2. Government sets rules in the marketplace that help signal to businesses what the constraints and opportunities are. We businesses respond to those signals, another reason our businesses choose to do what is right by business *and* what is right by people's health and the environment. We are choosing to reduce the costs and risks, especially product liability associated with managing toxic chemicals in products across supply chains. We are also choosing to make, buy, and sell healthier, greener products.
3. Many of our businesses are Main Street businesses. We see our customers face to face. Our *business owners and entrepreneurs* want to look their customers in the eye when they say “thank you for purchasing that crib for your newborn” -- and know that they aren't also selling them risky chemical residues, emissions, and materials. We are *choosing* to “go beyond compliance” to do what is right by our businesses *and* what is right by people's health and the environment.
4. We want to do right by our employees and not expose them to toxins in the workplace, which will only result in lost work days and productivity at a financial cost to our businesses.
5. We realize we are part of a complex, interdependent economy, society and world. Our businesses know that everyone, including them, bears a portion of the cost of externalities (costs not borne by those who generate them) like poor health and environmental contamination. We want to reduce the drivers of those costs, economy-wide, so that the costs go down.

Our businesses that are making the choice to do what is right for them *and* right by human health and the environment are competing with businesses that are making choices that are focused only on short-term profit at all costs

Business is creative and innovative. When we have good information and clear signals, we create and innovate products and product formulations that reflect the constraints and opportunities that the market and its rules present to us. We believe there is an important role for government to do more to provide clear signals and ensure that businesses and our customers have good information.

Even healthcare institutions are making the shift. Look at Hackensack University Medical Center which has implemented a Flame Retardant-Free purchasing policy that includes objectives like

“purchase and use products that minimize the risk of exposure to patients, visitors and employees to the effects of toxic chemical products potentially emitted by interior finish and furnishings under fire conditions”

The American Sustainable Business Council and our members would like your help with the following:

- Create a level playing field for our businesses that choose to manufacture, distribute, and sell products to children that are free from unnecessary “flame retarding” and other toxic chemicals. We don’t want to sell these toxic chemicals to children through products bought by their parents. We want rules that keep them from being put in products in the first place. This will help our businesses compete on level ground with those businesses that are not choosing to factor human health and the environment as much as we do into their business decisions.
- We want disclosure requirements that let intermediate manufacturers, distributors, retailers, employees, and consumers know what is in the products we are handling and buying so we can have the information that we need to *choose* which products to buy, use and sell to our customers. We want to see improved transparency and communication throughout our supply chains.
- We want rules that contribute to the expansion of markets for safer and greener products. Government policy that limits and identifies hazardous chemicals, and requires disclosure to the public of their use in products enables product makers to favorably differentiate themselves in the marketplace.
- There are additional steps that government can take to incentivize safer chemicals and products production through procurement and other mechanisms.

The market potential is there - According to Pike Research The North American market for “green chemistry” is projected to grow from \$3 billion to over \$20 billion during the same period by 2020.

In an independent study commissioned by the American Sustainable Business Council and the Green Chemistry and Commerce Council, the report Making the Business and Economic Case for Safer Chemistry found a substantially higher market growth potential for safer chemicals than their conventional counterparts. [Read or download the complete report.](#)

Now is the time to grow Alaska business and the economy based on principles and practices that protect the people and environment of Alaska.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be heard on these important business issues.

Sincerely,



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