

## Testimony for Toxic-Free Children's Act SB 151

Jessica Walsh, BSN, RN

My name is Jessica Walsh and I am an RN working in women's health and maternity care, a student nurse-midwife, and a mother. I am speaking up to urge you to vote in favor of the Toxic-Free children's Act SB 151.

In my work as a nurse caring for women in their reproductive years, I do a lot of counseling on avoidance of harmful chemicals and toxins that are known endocrine disruptors, in order for women to protect themselves and future pregnancies. Part of the work I do with women in maternity care is educating them on how to avoid these toxins and chemicals in order to protect their baby from exposure in utero to chemicals that could alter their health or genetic make-up. Despite that however, when babies are born in Alaska, or children are put to bed, placed on mats, or playing on furniture they are being exposed to incredibly high amounts of noxious, carcinogenic materials that are known causes of serious health issues. The chemicals present in the beds and sleep mats that newborn babies and young children rest their heads have the potential to alter their health for the rest of their life, totally negating the intentional choices their mothers made on the path of life-long health long before they were born.

As a parent, I have recently attempted to purchase a mattress for my son without flame retardants in Anchorage stores. After calling furniture and mattress stores across town I was informed time and time again that there were no options for flame-retardant free mattresses in the city. I was faced with the option of buying a mattress full of chemicals that are known to cause deleterious health effects to children, or to have him spend his 12 hours of sleep a night on a much safer home-made alternative. I am sure the Anchorage stores were sad to lose the business of another informed mother protecting her child from being exposed to known harmful chemicals for half of every day.

The chemicals in question, not only have been proven to have carcinogenic properties as well as other harmful health effects, but also they have not been shown to have a reasonable benefit in reducing mortality or morbidity from fire. In addition, these chemicals have already been banned from children's clothing for the very reasons I have previously listed. I urge you to protect Alaskan children from the unnecessary exposure to harmful chemicals in order to maintain the health their mother's strive so hard to give to them and for the protection of the economic, social, and physical wellness of Alaskans.