

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

House Bill 96 **Chemicals in Children's Products**

House Bill 96 is designed to protect the health of Alaska's children. Even though more and more studies indicate the link between toxins and serious health problems, it is still common for manufactured toys to contain potent chemicals that can be categorized as carcinogens, reproductive toxicants, developmental toxicants, bioaccumulative, or endocrine disruptors. HB 96 will require Alaska to adopt and publish a watch list of priority chemicals of high concern, requires manufacturers to disclose the toxic chemicals they add to products and authorizes the state to require safer alternatives.

One of the most highly recognized chemicals of concern is bisphenol A, better known as BPA. This toxin is found in products made from polycarbonate plastic, which includes baby food containers, teething rings, and plastic children's toys. Children become exposed to dangerous levels of BPA by direct contact with either the skin or mouth. Studies have shown that BPA mimics the hormone estrogen, and can harm brain development, learning and cognitive behavior, fat metabolism, cause early puberty, and lead to increased cancer susceptibility, among many other adverse health effects. Please note this is but one of hundreds of toxic chemicals that our children are exposed to daily, making the potential for cumulative effects startling.

Alarmingly, companies are still not required by the federal government to report the presence of BPA in their products. 18 states have already passed more than 70 laws that ban specific toxic chemicals in products. And an increasing number of states, including Maine, Minnesota, California and Washington have gone a step further and developed comprehensive policies to ban the presence of toxins such as BPA in common consumer products.

It is time for Alaska to join the ranks of other states unwilling to wait for the federal government to enforce regulations of toxins in products. HB 96 is a first step in taking proactive measures for the safety and health of our children by implementing a ban on toxic chemicals in manufactured children's toys sold in state. We have an obligation to the health of our children and families to enact this legislation. We can no longer allow the health of our youngest generations to be compromised from exposure to toxins in everyday products.