

January 27, 2016

The Alaska State Legislature
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

To the 29th Alaska State Legislature,

The Arc of Anchorage would like to thank Sen. Wielechowski for introducing SB 111 that calls for action to “Protecting Alaska’s Health From Toxic Flame Retardants” as well as Rep. Drummond, Rep. Kawasaki, and Rep. Foster for HB 199 that is “An Act relating to flame retardants and to the manufacture, distribution, and sale of products containing flame retardants; and providing for an effective date.” The Arc of Anchorage is a 501(c)3, private non-profit organization that serves individuals who experience intellectual and developmental disabilities, including youth in our after-school and summer program called The Arc Clubhouse, in addition to mental and behavioral health services. The Arc looks forward to a day when it is no longer needed because all preventable disabilities have been preventable, but until then, we need legislative action to help address prevention and this important bill is a part of that process.

Learning and developmental disabilities influence the quality of life for many of the children who utilize our services and programs at The Arc. It not only affects the children, but their parents and families as well. This fact creates a heavy financial burden on the State of Alaska through required special education services, health care costs, lost work time for parents, and a lifelong 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 prevent our children from exposure to such toxicants that we know or suspect can cause irreversible harm to their developing brains and growing bodies. We know there are safe alternatives that can replace these toxic chemicals without compromising fire safety.

Developing children are more susceptible to toxic exposure than adults. When certain exposures occur during childhood, even at very low doses, the development of a child’s brain and other organs including reproductive, hormonal, and immune systems can be permanently altered. Recent evidence has shown that PBDEs (polybrominated diphenyl ethers) are showing up in Alaska’s community populations, mainly in women, infants, and children. Some PBDEs are found in higher levels in children than in adults.

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Children rely on adults to keep them safe from harm. The Arc understands that Alaska's children are a vulnerable population and their health is important to Alaska's future. We support SB 111 and HB 199 that will protect everyone's health from exposures to toxic flame retardant chemicals and encourage the State of Alaska to phase out 10 toxic flame retardants used in children's products and home furniture. The Arc also supports a requirement for labels on products and furniture that contain toxic flame retardant chemicals to let consumers know if what they are buying contains these types of chemicals.

We ask Alaska's legislative leaders to step up to help protect Alaskan children from needless exposure to toxic flame retardant chemicals and ask for passage of SB 111 and HB 199.

Respectfully,

Gwen Zavodnick
Chief Executive Officer
The Arc of Anchorage

CC: Sen. Bill Wielechowski
Rep. Harriet Drummond
Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Rep. Neal Foster
Chris Hall, Alaska Community Action on Toxics

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