



April 3, 2019

Dear Members of the Alaska State Legislature:

The Alaska Public Interest Research Group (AkPIRG) is submitting this letter in support of HB 27, the Toxic-Free Children Act that would protect the health of Alaska's children and firefighters by preventing exposure to toxic flame retardant chemicals. If passed, these bills will prevent the manufacture, sale, and distribution of toxic and unnecessary flame retardant chemicals in children's products and home furniture.

AkPIRG, established in 1974, advocates on behalf of public and consumer interests. To our knowledge, we are the only non-governmental organization focused on addressing Alaska-specific consumer interest issues.

Chemical flame retardants have a range of harmful health effects, including cancer, learning disabilities, developmental impairment, and reproductive harm. Yet, they are found widely in our homes and environment. They are commonly used in children's products, carpeting, and home furniture. The national biomonitoring program conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 97 percent of people living in the United States have measurable quantities of flame retardants in their blood. Children, who are especially vulnerable, have been found to have three to five times higher levels of certain flame retardants than their mothers. Many flame retardants are persistent and bioaccumulate in fish, wildlife, and people. Alaskans are at higher risk of exposure because of our greater time spent indoors in insulated homes, as well as our reliance on traditional foods.

When buying children's furniture, toys, and personal care products, consumers often are unaware that many of their options are loaded with toxic chemicals. Unsafe chemicals create high risks for customers and damage trusting relationships between consumers and businesses. And 62% of chemical producers have said that their customers are interested in sustainable chemicals.

Under current federal law, flame retardant chemicals are virtually unregulated for their safety. These toxic chemicals pose a serious public health threat, yet do not provide a fire safety benefit. We need to enact legislation to phase out harmful flame retardant chemicals from children's products and furniture. Fortunately, fire safety can be achieved without these toxic chemicals. Scientific studies have found that flame retardant chemicals are not needed to provide fire safety. There are safe, economical, and effective alternatives to toxic flame retardants.

Businesses have already begun to respond to consumer concerns: nationally, corporations like Walmart, Target, and Staples have all endorsed their own transition to safer chemicals. And in Anchorage, businesses who are customer-oriented like Mattress Ranch have pledged to eliminate inventory containing flame

retardant chemicals, which have been shown to cause cancer, poor neurodevelopment in children, and a whole slew of other health problems.

It is the responsibility of our Alaska State Legislature to take action in passing the Toxic-Free Children Act (HB 27) to protect the health of our children and our future generations. The Anchorage assembly has recently passed an ordinance in banning flame retardants from certain consumer products – the rest of the state deserves to be protected as well. We urge you to support passage of HB27 during this legislative session. Thank you for your consideration and leadership on this important public health issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'V' followed by a stylized, cursive-like flourish that extends horizontally to the right.

Veri di Suvero
Executive Director
AkPIRG