



1745 N Street NW, 4th Floor, Washington, DC 20036

April 5, 2010

The Honorable Bobby Rush
Chair, Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC

Re: **Safer Chemical Policy Reform**

Dear Chairman Rush,

Thank you for your strong leadership in building the foundation for comprehensive policy reform to fix our broken chemical regulatory system. We appreciate the opportunity to work closely with you to modernize the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) of 1976 so that it specifically addresses the impact of toxic and legacy chemicals on communities-of-color and low income communities.

We, the undersigned, join our voices to call attention to the particular burdens related to toxic chemical exposure that is borne by communities-of-color and low income communities. Because these communities across the United States have had both public health and environmental degradation as a result of the disproportionate impacts of a wide array of chemical exposures.

Communities-of-color, Indigenous peoples, and low-income communities are not only exposed to current chemicals through consumer products, industrial polluters, and chemical plants in their neighborhoods, but they are also most frequently afflicted by legacy chemicals from prior industrial land uses, which now lay fallow and abandoned, ushering forth an eerily toxic harvest of waste sites that poison all in these neighborhoods, especially the most vulnerable populations like children. From Alaska to the Gulf Coast, in urban centers like Chicago, New York, Hartford, San Diego and Austin, or to the rural farm country of North Carolina; from the Anishinabe tribe in the Great Lakes to the Penobscot nation in Maine and for countless other communities-of-color, Indigenous peoples across this nation – chemical contamination is real and far too common.

What does this real contamination and disproportionate exposure look like on the ground in these communities?

- **The Arctic:** Indigenous peoples reliant on traditional diets of fish and marine mammals are among the most highly exposed to persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals (PBTs) on earth. A study of the Yupik people of St. Lawrence Island in Alaska found that they carry PCBs in their blood at levels that are 6-9 times higher than the general population in the lower-48 states. In addition to the high levels of such “legacy” chemicals such as polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) that have been banned in the U.S. for more than 30 years, levels of currently used chemicals such as perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are rapidly rising, posing additional health hazards to northern peoples.
- **Gulf Coast:** Residents, after being ravaged by the hurricanes Katrina and Rita, were further assaulted by cancer causing formaldehyde inside the trailer homes that were provided by the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA).
- **New Bedford, MA and other urban centers:** One of the most common chemicals found in toxic waste sites that are located in urban residential neighborhoods is trichloroethylene (TCE), which is likely to cause cancer, liver and kidney disease as well as autoimmune diseases. TCE can be inhaled after vaporizing on playgrounds or leaching into people’s basements and drinking water.
- **Detroit, Chicago, New York City, Austin, Hartford, San Diego, Baltimore, etc:** In urban centers in the United States, 99 cent stores abound, and they sell many more lead laden toys and jewelry containing cadmium, a known carcinogen that causes kidney and immune system damage than at other stores.
- **Northern Minnesota:** The Anishinabe/Ojibwe have practiced their land-based culture for hundreds of years, the rivers where they fish are polluted with dioxin and mercury, and their diets are now at risk because they are unable to harvest uncontaminated wild rice or catch unpolluted fish or and other aquatic traditional foods.
- **Nationwide:** Bodegas in many urban centers stock baby bottles and canned foods manufactured or lined with Bisphenol A (BPA) are easily accessible because of the cost and proximity. BPA has been associated with obesity, cancer, and many other health conditions. Canned foods are a major source of nutrition and often the only source of vegetables in low-income neighborhoods.

The vignettes above are by no means exhaustive of the many stories that communities-of-color, Indigenous peoples have to share on the subject of chemical contamination. In fact, we could and have filled books with many more stories such as *Dumping In Dixie* or *Noxious New York* by Robert Bullard and Julie Sze respectively. While the stories do not cover every community-of-color that is impacted, they nevertheless highlight that the pathways to exposure cover all environmental media (land, air and water) and that toxic chemicals are in the bodies and food of residents in these disproportionately impacted neighborhoods.

Because of the multiplicity of toxic chemical exposures from both current and legacy sources borne by these communities, the health profile of residents who live in them reveal the many health disparities that they confront. Exposures to PBTs, such as lead and cadmium or chemicals like TCE, hexavalent chromium, organic solvents, formaldehyde and asbestos in communities-of-color, Indigenous peoples are linked to higher levels of cancer, diabetes, asthma, heart disease and several other types of morbidity.

The groups signed on to this letter recognize that communities-of-color and low income communities bear a disproportionate burden of toxic chemical exposures and related negative health outcomes. We have joined our voices to call for reform of TSCA, and we urge you to take immediate action on the worst chemicals in TSCA reform legislation because of their impact on all people, but especially our most vulnerable.

In addition to taking immediate action on chemicals most commonly affecting our communities, we also urge you to give the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority to create and implement action plans to relieve this burden from communities such as these that are highly impacted by toxic chemicals.

In short, we urge you to introduce the *strongest* possible TSCA reform bill, one that sets a *high bar* for protection of public health. We will be there in force to help you pass a strong bill. We believe that TSCA reform legislation should embody three key policy elements to advance environmental justice:

1. Ensure Environmental Justice

Effective reform should contribute substantially to reducing the disproportionate burden of toxic chemical exposure placed on low-income people, people of color and indigenous communities.

2. Immediately Act on the Worst Chemicals First and Promote Safer Alternatives

Persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals (PBTs) are uniquely dangerous and should be phased out of commerce except for critical uses that lack viable alternatives. Exposure to other toxic chemicals, like formaldehyde, that have already been extensively studied should be reduced to the maximum extent feasible. Our communities cannot wait on yet another study on these proven poisons. Green chemistry research should be expanded, and safer chemicals favored over those with known health hazards.

3. Protect All People, and Vulnerable Groups, Using the Best Science

All chemicals should be assessed against a health standard that protects all people and the environment, especially the most vulnerable subpopulations, including children, workers, and pregnant women. EPA should adopt the recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences for reforming risk assessment. Biomonitoring by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should be significantly expanded and used by EPA to assess pollution in people.

Again, we stand ready to join you in a broad-based national campaign to support strong TSCA reform legislation. The public and many businesses are with us on the need for federal action. Our success will mean safer chemicals and healthy families in a green and vibrant economy.

Thank you for your continued leadership in protecting the health of all Americans.

Sincerely,

ALABAMA

Gidget R. Travis
Rogersville, AL

Kimberly Irish
Breast Cancer Action
San Francisco, CA

ALASKA

Pamela Miller
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Anchorage, AK

Jeanne Rizzo, RN
Breast Cancer Fund
San Francisco, CA

Andrea Carmen, Executive Director
International Indian Treaty Council
Palmer, AK

Jane Williams
California Communities Against Toxics
Rosamond, CA

ARIZONA

Nancy Zierenberg
Conservation Committee of Tucson
Chapter of Arizona Native Plant Society
Tucson, AZ

Julia Liou
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
Oakland, CA

Stephen Brittle
Don't Waste Arizona, Inc.
Phoenix, AZ

Robina Suwol
California Safe Schools
Toluca Lake, CA

CALIFORNIA

Mitzi Shpak
Action Now
No. Hollywood, CA

Raquel Estrada
CAT Homestead Neighborhood
Center for Community Action and
Environmental Justice
Mira Loma, CA

Eveline Shen
Asian Communities for Reproductive Justice
Oakland, CA

Michael Green
Center for Environmental Health
Oakland, CA

Martha Arguello
Black Women for Wellness
Los Angeles, CA

Malkia A. Cyril
Center for Media Justice
Oakland, CA

Caroline Farrell
Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment
Delano and San Francisco, CA

Ansje Miller
Change - Californians for a Healthy and
Green Economy
Oakland, CA

Alex T. Tom
Chinese Progressive Association
San Francisco, CA

Paul Ferrazzi
Citizen's Coalition for a Safe Community
Culver City, CA

Bill Gallegos
Citizens for a Better Environment
Oakland and Los Angeles, CA

Andria Ventura
Clean Water Action – California
San Francisco, CA

Jesse N. Marquez
Coalition for a Safe Environment
Wilmington, CA

Ansje Miller
Coalition for Clean Air
Los Angeles, CA

Luis Olmedo
Comite Civico Del Valle, Inc.
Brawley, CA

Allison Saldana
Dept. of Toxic Substances Control
Chatsworth, CA

Diane Takvorian
Environmental Health Coalition
National City, CA

Bradley Angel
Greenaction for Health and Environmental
Justice
San Francisco, CA

José T. Bravo
Just Transition Alliance
San Diego, CA

Francisca Porchas
Labor/Community Strategy Center
Los Angeles, CA

Gabrielle Weeks
Long Beach Coalition For A Safe
Environment
Long Beach, CA

Lisa Russ
Movement Strategy Center
Oakland, CA

Karl A. Tupper
Pesticide Action Network North America
San Francisco, CA

Antonio Díaz
People Organizing to Demand
Environmental & Economic Rights
San Francisco, CA

Martha Dina Argüello
Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los
Angeles
Los Angeles, CA

Kathy Kneer
Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California
Sacramento, CA

Alissa Shaw
Planned Parenthood Mar Monte
Mar Monte, CA

Michael Sarmiento
Southwest Network for Environmental and
Economic Justice
Los Angeles, CA

Caitlin Sislin, Esq.
Women's Earth Alliance
Berkley, CA

Gail Bateson
Worksafe (California)
Oakland, CA

COLORADO

Gary Wockner
Clean Water Action – Colorado
Ft. Collins, CO

Tomas Itsa Shash
Fort Lewis College RSO Buffalo Council
Durango, CO

CONNECTICUT

Sarah Uhl
Clean Water Action - Connecticut
Hartford, CT

Carole Bergeron, PhD, RN
CT Nurses' Association, CT Nurses'
Foundation
Meriden, CT

Mark A. Mitchell M.D., MPH
Connecticut Coalition for Environmental
Justice
Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport, CT

Edith Pestana, MPH
Environmental Justice Program
CT DEP – Office of Commissioner
Hartford, CT

Larry and Harriet Smith
Elm City Clean Air
New Haven, CT

Megan Jenny
Toxics Action Center
West Hartford, CT

Rachel Shaffer
New Haven, CT

DELEWARE

Alan Muller
Green Delaware
Port Penn, DE

Charles Brittingham
NAACP Delaware State Conference of
Branches
Wilmington, DE

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Joyce Martin, JD
American Association on Intellectual and
Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD)
Washington, DC

Andrew Fellows
Clean Water Action - Chesapeake Region
Washington, DC

Lynn Thorp
Clean Water Action - National
Washington, DC

Emily Enderle
Earthjustice
Washington, DC

Richard A. Denison, Ph.D.
Environmental Defense Fund
Washington, DC

Rick Hind
Greenpeace
Washington, DC

Ariana Kelly
MomsRising
Washington, DC

Kristen Welker-Hood ScD, MSN, RN
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington, DC

Kirsten Moore
Jennifer Rogers
Reproductive Health Technologies Project
Washington, DC

Leslie G. Fields
Sierra Club
Washington, DC

Liz Hitchcock
U.S. PIRG
Washington, DC

FLORIDA

Kathy Aterno
Clean Water Action - Florida
Miami, FL

Marybeth Palmigiano, MPH
Physicians for Social Responsibility -
Tampa Bay
Tampa Bay, FL

GEORGIA

Robert D. Bullard, Ph. D.
Environmental Justice Resource Center
Clark Atlanta University
Atlanta, GA

IDAHO

Linda Langness, Ph.D
Idaho Conservation League
Boise, ID

ILLINOIS

Kimberly Wasserman
Little Village Environmental Justice
Organization
Chicago, IL

INDIANA

Lin Kaatz Chary, PhD, MPH
Indiana Toxics Action
Gary, IN

KENTUCY

Elizabeth Crowe
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Berea, KY

Eboni Neal Cochran
REACT - Rubbertown Emergency ACTION
Louisville, KY

MAINE

Mike Belliveau
Environmental Health Strategy Center
Bangor, ME

MARYLAND

Jeff Sell, Esq.
Autism Society
Bethesda, MD

Jenny Levin
Maryland Public Interest Research Group
Baltimore, MD

Diane D'Arrigo
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Takoma Park, MD

MASSACHUSETTS

Cindy Luppi
Clean Water Action - New England
Boston, MA

Lee Ketelsen,
Clean Water Action Alliance of MA
Boston, MA

Jana Chicoine
Concerned Citizens of Russell
Russell, MA

Gretchen Brewer
Earth Circle Conservation & Recycling
Roslindale, MA

Judith Robinson
Environmental Health Fund
Jamaica Plain, Boston, MA

Chris Matera
Massachusetts Forest Watch
Northampton, MA

Karen A. Vilandry
New Bedford Environmental Justice
Network
Fairhaven, MA

MICHIGAN

Shawn D. Kimmel, PhD
Center for Community-driven Policymaking
Detroit, MI

Susan Harley
Clean Water Action - Michigan
East Lansing, MI

Donele Wilkins
Detroitters Working for Environmental
Justice
Detroit, MI

Karen Hammer
Greenacres-Woodward Civic Association
Detroit, MI

Sandra Turner-Handy
Michigan Environmental Council
Lansing, MI

Margaret Weber
Rosedale Recycles
Detroit, MI

Ted Schettler MD,
Science and Environmental Health Network
Ann Arbor, MI

MINNESOTA

Deanna White
Kim LaBo
Clean Water Action – Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN

Cheryl Wilson
Environmental Justice Advocates of
Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN

Kathleen Schuler
Healthy Legacy Coalition
Minneapolis, MN

Tom B.K. Goldtooth
Indigenous Environmental Network
Bemidji, MN

Jim Harkness
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Minneapolis, MN

Nancy Hone
Neighbors Against the Burner
St. Paul, MN

Ronnie Cummins
Organic Consumers Association
Finland, MN

Julia Earl,
Preventing Harm Minnesota
St. Paul, MN

Karen Joy Clark
Women's Environmental Institute
St. Paul, MN

MISSISSIPPI

Deacon Ivory Walmon
Coalition of Communities
Hattiesburg, MS

Carolyn Jordan
Carolyn Reed
Coalition of Communities
Petal, MS

Pastor Calvin Brown
Sherri Jones
Deacon R. L. Pace
Pastor Terry Montgomery
Coalition of Communities
Columbia, MS

MONTANA

Erin Switalski
Women's Voices for the Earth
Missoula, MT

NEW JERSEY

Nelson Carrasquillo
CATA - The Farmworkers Support
Committee
Glassboro, NJ

Amy Goldsmith
Clean Water Action - New Jersey
Belmar, NJ

Doug O'Malley
Environment New Jersey
Trenton, NJ

Nelson Carrasquillo
Farmworker Health and Safety Institute
Glassboro, NJ

Ana I. Baptista, PhD
Ironbound Community Corp
Newark, NJ

Nicky Sheats
Environmental Justice Alliance
Trenton, NJ

Rebecca Alper
NJ Public Interest Research Group
Trenton, NJ

Rick Engler
NJ Work Environment Council
Trenton, NJ

NEW MEXICO

Bianca Encinias
Southwest Network for Environmental and
Economic Justice
Albuquerque, NM

April Mondragon
El Prado, NM

NEW YORK

Paul Connett, PhD,
Ellen Connett,
American Environmental Health Studies
Project, Inc.
Canton, NY

Aaron Mair
Arbor Hill Environmental Justice, Inc
Albany, New York

Barbara Warren
Citizens' Environmental Coalition
Albany, NY

Kathleen A. Curtis, LPN
Clean New York
Schenectady, NY

Marian Feinberg
For A Better Bronx
Bronx, NY

Elizabeth C. Yeampierre
UPROSE
Brooklyn, NY

Cecil Corbin-Mark
We Act for Environmental Justice
Harlem, NY

Stephen Viederman
New York, NY

NORTH CAROLINA

Ravi Horne
Land Loss Prevention Project
Durham, NC

OHIO

Teresa Mills
Buckeye Environmental Network
Grove City, OH

Cheryl Johncox,
Buckeye Forest Council
Columbus, OH

Kathleen Boutis
Ohioans for Health, Environment & Justice
Yellowsprings, OH

OKLAHOMA

Linda Hogan
Tishomingo, OK

ONTARIO

Jorge A. Escobar
United Steelworkers
Ottawa, ON

Andrea Hatton
Peterborough, ON

OREGON

Joseph Miller PhD
Susan Katz MD
Patricia Murphy ND
Oregon Chapter of Physicians for Social
Responsibility
Portland, OR

Tim Hermach
Native Forest Council
Eugene, OR

Lisa Arkin
Oregon Toxics Alliance
Eugene, OR

Sarah Doll
SAFER States
Portland, OR

Peter C. Little
Corvallis, OR

PENNSYLVANIA

Myron Arnowitt
Clean Water Action - Pennsylvania
Pittsburgh, PA

Patricia Lillie
Learning Disabilities Association of
America
Pittsburgh, PA

Adam H. Cutler
Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia
Philadelphia, PA

RHODE ISLAND

Sheila Dormody
Clean Water Action – Rhode Island
Providence, RI

Amelia Rose
Environmental Justice League of Rhode
Island
Providence, RI

SOUTH CAROLINA

Laura K. Greiner
Embrace Humanrace, LLC
Greenville, SC

SOUTH DAKOTA

Debra White Plume
Owe Aku Bring Back the Way
Manderson, SD

TENNESSEE

Bruce Wood
BURNT
Nashville, TN

TEXAS

Graciela Sanchez
Esperanza Peace and Justice Center San
Antonio, TX

Susana Almanza
People Organized in Defense of Earth and
her Resources
Austin, TX

Rebekah Jopling
Austin, TX

VERMONT

Carol Westinghouse
Informed Green Solutions
East Burke, VT

VIRGINIA

Lois Gibbs
Center for Health, Environment & Justice
Falls Church, VA

WASHINGTON

Jonathan Betz-Zall
Community Coalition for Environmental
Justice
Seattle, WA

Sandra Coon, DVM
Seattle, WA

Cc:

Lisa Jackson, EPA Administrator
Steve Owens, EPA OPPTS Assistant Administrator
Lisa Garcia, EPA Environmental Justice Special Advisor

