

March 5, 2014

The Honorable John Shimkus  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman,

The BlueGreen Alliance is a national partnership of labor unions and environmental organizations representing 14 million members, including the men and women who make chemicals and the workers who use those chemicals to process food, make paper, clean office buildings and hospitals, and manufacture cars and trucks. We write today to express our opposition to the recently released discussion draft titled the ‘Chemicals in Commerce Act.’

Having supported the effort to update the 37 year old Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) for many years, we had been hopeful that the House Energy and Commerce Committee, in the wake of six months of Committee hearings, as well as long debate over the Chemical Safety Improvement Act in the Senate, would produce forward-thinking legislation to advance the dialogue. However, we now see the language of the discussion draft as a failed attempt to protect the public from the health impacts of toxic chemicals. Instead this draft, if enacted into law, would roll back even the very limited oversight that we currently have.

Among the many problems we see in this draft are:

- Annulling laws in many states that provide most of the information on toxic chemicals in industrial, commercial, and consumer products;
- Failing to adequately protect workers exposed to toxic chemicals in their workplace;

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- Continuing the legal standard and other hurdles in current TSCA that prevented the EPA from regulating even a substance as deadly as asbestos;
- Making it nearly impossible for the EPA to require health information for new chemicals before they end up on the market for use in our workplaces, and in the products we bring into our homes;
- Significantly rolling back the EPA's authority to restrict the use of existing toxic chemicals in industrial, commercial, and consumer products;
- Requiring the EPA to weigh the economic benefits of a chemical against its human health impacts such as birth defects, cancer, autism, or infertility.

By ignoring nearly every recommendation for reform made by health professionals, environmental experts, worker communities, and advocates for families dealing with cancer, autism, infertility and other health problems linked to chemical exposure, the draft would adopt a 'wish list' tailored to ensure regulatory inaction. That such an election year political statement would be put forth, regarding an issue so critical to human health and the environment, simply lacks credibility.

Accordingly, we oppose this draft legislation, as should anyone who cares about the health impacts of chemicals on American families. We urge that it not be formally introduced as a House bill and, instead, that a new effort be made by the Committee to responsibly legislate TSCA reform.

Sincerely,



David A. Foster  
Executive Director  
BlueGreen Alliance

cc: Congressman Fred Upton, Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee

Congressman Henry Waxman, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Committee

Congressman Paul Tonko, Ranking Member, House Energy and Commerce Environment and the Economy Subcommittee

House of Representatives Members