Learning Disabilities Association of Maine

PROUD to be THE MAINE STATE AFFILIATE OF LDAA WWW.LDAMERICA.ORG

"Raising aspirations and expanding possibilities"

Representative John Shimkus, Chair
Environment and Economy Subcommittee
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Representative Paul Tonko, Ranking Member
Environment and Economy Subcommittee
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Representative Fred Upton, Chair
House Energy and Commerce Committee

Representative Henry Waxman, Ranking Member
House Energy and Commerce Committee

March 10, 2014

Dear Chairman Shimkus, Ranking Member Tonko, Chairman Upton, and Ranking Member Waxman,

On behalf of the Learning Disabilities Association of Maine, I am writing in strong opposition to the discussion draft of the Chemicals in Commerce Act (CICA). Our organization is strongly opposed to the bill as drafted because it does not protect pregnant women, children, and other vulnerable populations from toxic chemicals.

The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine advocates on behalf of children and adults with learning disabilities and the families and professionals who support them. We support strong and meaningful reform of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) because toxic chemicals are linked to many chronic and disabling conditions, from learning disabilities to cancer.

Learning and developmental disabilities are estimated to affect approximately one in six children in the U.S. under the age of 18. There are many factors that contribute to these numbers – heredity, gene expression, social environment, nutrition and chemical contaminants – but the *National Academy of Sciences has estimated that 3% are directly due to toxic chemical exposure and these exposures play a role in at least another 25%.* **First and foremost we should be eliminating the preventable causes of these disabilities, but sadly this proposed draft will not prevent, or even lessen, these chemical exposures.**

The best science demonstrates that early exposures to toxic chemicals during critical developmental windows of vulnerability can be especially harmful, and lead to life-long neurological and learning challenges. Since TSCA became law in 1976, we have even more evidence that lead, mercury, and other neurotoxic chemicals have profound and lifelong impacts on the developing brain. **To ensure the healthy brain development of our children, this bill must require that all existing and new chemicals are tested and proven to be safe for pregnant women, children, and other vulnerable populations.**

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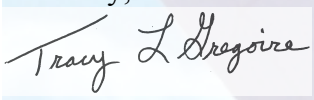
We need a new solution for managing toxic chemicals this year, but the Chemicals in Commerce Act is a deeply disturbing step in the wrong direction. **First, it takes power away from states and places it in the hands of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Then, it further shackles the EPA so that it cannot take effective action on toxic chemicals. And finally, it locks the door on any state action in the future.**

This last flaw is deeply troubling for our state of Maine, which was has helped lead the way for safer products. Maine's Kid Safe Products Act of 2008 creates a process to identify the worst household chemicals based on health hazards and harmful exposure, and then gives the state the tools to prioritize chemicals for action to protect the health of our children and future generations. **The proposed Chemicals in Commerce Act could dismantle the progress developed by states like Maine and prevent further actions to protect Maine families from the worst toxic chemicals.**

The Learning Disabilities Association of Maine respectfully urges your committee to draft a new chemical safety law, based on the National Academy of Sciences and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations, that would require chemicals be found safe for our children's developing minds and bodies.

Thank you for your service and for your time and attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,



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CC: Members of the Environment and Economic Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee

Coalition for Autism Research and Education (C.A.R.E), GOP Doctors Caucus, Congressional Caucus on Community Health, Congressional Children's Healthcare Caucus, Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues

Honorable Susan Collins and Honorable Angus King
Honorable Mike Michaud and Honorable Chellie Pingree