

# Children's Safe Products Act: Ensuring a Right-to-Know About Toxic Chemicals in Toys



Michigan Network for  
**CHILDREN'S**  
**Environmental**  
**HEALTH**

*Exposure to even small amounts of a toxic chemical can impact a child's ability to reach his or her full potential. The Children's Safe Products Act would help protect children and would inform parents and other consumers about chemicals of highest concern in toys and other children's products.*

## MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN AT RISK

### CHEMICAL EXPOSURE IS WIDESPREAD

- **Toxic chemicals are present** in the Great Lakes fish and the environment, and in house dust, homes, our own **bodies**, and breast milk as well as in toys and other children's products.<sup>1</sup>
- **Children are more vulnerable to health effects from toxic chemicals** since their systems are still developing & because pound for pound, they eat, drink, and breathe about two and a half times more than adults.<sup>2</sup> They also place objects and their hands directly into their mouths, assuring they ingest more contaminants.

### CHILDREN'S PRODUCTS MAY CONTAIN TOXIC CHEMICALS

- **Arsenic exposure** is associated with **lower IQ scores** in school-aged children. Prenatal and early childhood exposures to arsenic can also increase the risk of lung cancer and respiratory disease in later life.<sup>3</sup> Arsenic was detected in approximately 1.4% of children's products surveyed by HealthyToys.org. in 2008.<sup>4</sup>
- **Lead exposure** can result in **IQ deficits, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, stunted or slowed growth, and impaired hearing.** At increasingly high levels of exposure, a child may suffer kidney damage, become mentally retarded, or fall into a coma.<sup>5</sup> Lead was found in approximately 20% of children's products surveyed by HealthyToys.org in 2008.<sup>4</sup>
- **Mercury exposure** is toxic to the nervous system and can have detrimental effects on the kidneys.<sup>6</sup> Mercury was detected in 1% of children's products surveyed by Healthytoys.org in 2008.<sup>4</sup>

## Dangers of lead and arsenic poisoning

### Arsenic poisoning

Nerve damage

Skin damage:

- Hyperkeratosis (scaling skin)
- Pigment changes

Increased cancer risk:

- Lung
- Bladder
- Kidney and liver cancers

Circulatory problems in skin



### Lead poisoning

High levels of lead

- Mental retardation, coma, convulsions and death

Low levels of lead

- Reduced IQ and attention span, impaired growth, reading and learning disabilities, hearing loss and a range of other health and behavioral effects.

Sources: Alliance to End Childhood Lead Poisoning and news wires

The Denver Post

- **Bisphenol-A** is the main ingredient in hard polycarbonate plastics found in some baby bottles, drinking water bottles, and food containers, and one of the "top 50 production-volume chemicals in the U.S."<sup>7</sup> In experiments with female mice, bisphenol-A has been found to induce the genetic defect that causes **Down's syndrome**, at levels comparable to those found in women tested to date.<sup>7</sup>
- In general, the increased presence of toxic chemicals has been linked with **increased incidence rates of a wide range of children's health and developmental issues**, including asthma and autism.<sup>7</sup>
- **There is no reason for "toxic toys!"** The same products can and often are made without potentially harmful chemicals.

## OUR FEDERAL CHEMICAL PROTECTION SYSTEM IS BROKEN

- Over three decades ago, Congress passed the **Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)** to authorize the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to control chemicals that pose an unreasonable risk to human health or the environment.<sup>9</sup> Currently, there are at least 80,000 chemical compounds registered for commercial use in the United States; 62,000 chemicals were grandfathered under TSCA without mandatory testing. **About 2,000 new compounds that may pose hazards to human health are introduced into commercial use each year.**<sup>10</sup> Traditional toxicologic methods cannot characterize and define the toxicity of such a large number of compounds in a cost-efficient and timely manner.<sup>11</sup> Under TSCA, the EPA has required testing on **fewer than 200 chemicals and restricted only 5 chemicals** in commerce.<sup>10</sup>
- The **U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO)**, the investigative arm of Congress, has found that **TSCA is inadequate.**<sup>12</sup>
- In August 2008, former President Bush signed the **Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA)**, which establishes the first federal restrictions on toxics in children's products and addresses only two chemicals, lead and phthalates. Please see our fact sheet, "Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008."

## OTHER STATES AND COUNTRIES ARE LEADING THE WAY

- **Washington, Maine, California, and Minnesota** have laws stronger than the proposed Michigan Children's Safe Products Act.<sup>13, 14, 15</sup> Many other states are poised to take strong action as well.
- The European Union adopted **Registration, Evaluation, and Authorization of Chemicals (REACH)**, which vastly increases the amount of information available to determine the safety of chemical products.<sup>16</sup>



## MICHIGAN'S CHILDREN'S SAFE PRODUCTS ACT (HB 4763-4769) TAKES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

- Requires the state by 2011 to create and regularly update a **comprehensive list of chemicals of concern** known to cause **cancer, reproductive or developmental harm, neurotoxicity, hormone disruption, or other toxicity**, or which are **persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic**, based on published government lists and other existing sources of data.
- From this initial list, authoritative sources will select by 2012 and regularly update "**chemicals of highest concern**" based on their use in children's products, presence in children, household dust, human breast milk or cord blood, or other specific relevance to the health of Michigan's children.

## ENSURES A PARENT'S RIGHT TO KNOW AND TRANSPARENCY

- Large manufacturers of children's products that contain "chemicals of highest concern" above a threshold level **must publicly identify what products contain what chemicals and in what amounts.** The Michigan Department of Community Health must **make this information easily accessible.**
- Manufacturers must publicly report whether Screening Information Data Set or equivalent information exists for all chemicals in their children's product sold in Michigan.
- **There are no requirements for retailers, small manufacturers, or industrial users.**

## ENCOURAGES GREEN JOBS

- Authorizes Michigan to participate in an **interstate clearinghouse** to share information and promote safer alternatives.
- Companion legislation incentivizes creating safer alternatives in Michigan through **Green Chemistry.**

## *Please Support the Michigan Children's Safe Products Act (HB 4763-4769), which passed the*

*Michigan House in May and currently sits before the Senate Health Policy Committee*

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**Bolding** was added by the Michigan Network for Children's Environmental Health.

**Our Mission:** Through education, outreach, and advocacy, we seek to protect Michigan's children from adverse impacts caused by exposure to widespread hazardous chemicals.

**Network Members:** American Academy of Pediatrics (Michigan Chapter), Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS), Association for Children's Mental Health, Autism Society of Michigan, Citizens for Alternatives to Chemical Contamination, Clean Water Fund, Clinton County Family Resource Center, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice, East Michigan Environmental Action Council, Ecology Center, Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, Learning Disabilities Association (LDA) of Michigan, Local Motion, Michigan Chapter of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, Michigan Coalition for Children and Families, Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan League of Conservation Voters Education Fund, Michigan Nurses Association, Science and Environmental Health Network, Sierra Club Michigan Chapter, Voices for Earth Justice.

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