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**TESTIMONY RE: RAISED BILL 5805 AN ACT CONCERNING TOXIC  
SUBSTANCES**

Environment Committee Hearing  
March 7; 2008

TO: Senator Meyer, Representative Roy and members of the Environment  
Committee.

FROM: Connecticut Nurses' Association

Connecticut Nurses' Association supports this bill which would begin the phase-out of certain polybrominated diphenyl ethers or **PBDEs** flame retardants and replaced with safer alternatives as well phase out the use of alkyphenol ethoxylates (**APEs**) We offer the following information or concerns related to our support.

- Brominated fire retardants (**PBDEs**) are associated with numerous public health concerns, including cancer, birth defects, thyroid disruption, hearing deficits, learning disorders such as ADHD, and mental retardation.
  - We have a growing body of scientific evidence indicating that levels of PBDEs are rising rapidly in the environment and in human bodies, particularly in North America where the use of PBDEs is the highest.
  - Some of the chemicals being used today were banned from use in children's sleepwear in 1977 by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, but are still creating exposure to children through direct physical or oral contact with home furniture, mattresses or electronics including computers and televisions.
  - The chemical structures in these flame retardants do not break down easily which make them persistent in the environment. They are also absorbed by the body and accumulate in the fatty tissue.
- **APEs** do not biodegrade easily after they are washed down the drain. As a result, nonylphenol has been found in water and sediment downstream from sewage

treatment plants, paper pulp mills, and industrial facilities. Some studies have found altered reproduction, feminization, hermaphroditism, and lower survival rates in salmon and other fish living in nonylphenol-contaminated water. These effects have been found in wildlife even at low doses.

Significant workplace exposures to these chemicals can also be avoided by substituting brominated flame retardants with safer alternatives and re-designing products to effectively meet fire safety standards. Phasing out brominated flame retardants in household furniture, textiles and electronics will help to protect furniture and textile workers as well as firefighters and other first responders from toxic exposure.

Connecticut can achieve the same fire safety benefits without the use of brominated flame retardants. This conclusion that led the governments of California, Maine, and others in Europe to pass new legislation that modernizes their standards and sets new restrictions regarding flame retardants. In total, 14 states have taken some level of action to ban octaBDE and pentaBDE, and phase out decaBDE.

The proposed phase-out of these dangerous chemicals seems a logical first step to decreasing their use. Phasing out of these chemicals of concern *is* possible because safer alternatives exist and others are being developed. Connecticut's companies need to transition to these alternatives in order to be viable in the global market.

Thank you and we urge the committee to vote favorably to support this bill and make Connecticut the 15<sup>th</sup> state to take action against these harmful chemicals.

The Connecticut Nurses' Association is a member of the Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Connecticut ([www.safehealthycct.org](http://www.safehealthycct.org)) and Health Care Without Harm (<http://www.noharm.org/>)

References can be found at: [www.noharm.org](http://www.noharm.org)

*Brominated Flame Retardants: Rising Levels of Concern*

*Flame Retardants: Alarming Increases in Humans and the Environment*