



MASSACHUSETTS BREAST CANCER COALITION

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FEDERAL SAFE CHEMICALS ACT OF 2013 HAS POTENTIAL FOR BREAST CANCER PREVENTION

Yesterday Senator Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Kristen Gillibrand (D-NY) reintroduced the federal Safe Chemicals Act of 2013. If passed, this bill would reform the outdated Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 to repair some of its flaws. It would require that chemical manufacturers prove their chemicals are safe before they go on the market. Additionally, it would provide a system for testing the health impacts of chemicals already in use and enable the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to identify and place restrictions on the worst chemicals.

With a mission to prevent environmental causes of breast cancer, the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition supports comprehensive reform of regulatory chemical legislation that enables government agencies to require safety testing and gives the authority to restrict the use of carcinogens or endocrine disrupting compounds linked to breast cancer and other diseases.

Cheryl Osimo, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition says, “Too many of the women diagnosed with breast cancer today have no known risk factors. We believe that environmental contaminants play a big role in high breast cancer incidence and this hypothesis is increasingly supported by scientific research from our sister organization, Silent Spring Institute.”

Silent Spring Institute was founded in 1994 and is the only organization dedicated to breast cancer prevention research. Their studies are published in peer reviewed journals and have been cited in government reports by the President’s Cancer Panel, Institute of Medicine, and Federal Interagency Breast Cancer and Environment Research Coordinating Committee. In their review of mammary carcinogens, Silent Spring Institute researchers identified 216 chemicals that cause mammary tumors in animal studies. Over 100 of these chemicals are so common in our environments that we are exposed to them on a daily basis.

Given these findings, it is clear that our outdated chemical regulations cannot sufficiently protect the public health from these contaminants. Since World War II, over 85,000 synthetic chemicals



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have been added to our environment, very few have been adequately tested for effects on human health, and only a handful of substances have been restricted or banned under the Toxic Substances Control Act since 1976.

“The Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition supported the Safe Chemicals Act throughout the last legislative session because of the potential to positively impact the health of American citizens,” Cheryl says. “In 2011, we traveled to Capitol Hill to discuss our support of the bill with Senators and their staff.”

Just one year later in July 2012, the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works voted on it favorably, making this the first time in over three decades a senate panel voted to reform TSCA. The bill was sent to the full senate for a vote but unfortunately it died in December with the end of the legislative session.

Current national breast cancer incidence rates estimate one in eight women alive today will develop breast cancer in their lifetime. The Massachusetts state average is over 5% higher than this national average and on Cape Cod incidence rates soar to approximately 22% above the national rate. The reintroduction of the Safe Chemicals Act reopens the opportunity to require testing of chemicals that contribute to these staggering rates. For the first time, chemical industries would be required to develop and provide information on the health and safety of chemicals in order for them to remain in use.

The Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition urges citizens across the state to contact their legislators to support the Safe Chemicals Act throughout the legislative process. Please visit www.malegislature.gov/People/Search today to find your legislators’ email and telephone number.

For more information about the Massachusetts Breast Cancer Coalition and Silent Spring Institute, please visit www.mbcc.org and www.silentspring.org. All questions or further information can be directed to Cheryl Osimo at 508-246-3047 or cosimo@mbcc.org.