

PRESS RELEASE

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CALIFORNIA COULD SAVE \$700 MILLION IN HEALTH CARE COSTS BY REDUCING CHEMICAL EXPOSURE

State and Federal reform of toxics law would make Californians healthier, wealthier

LOS ANGELES—Cash-strapped California could save at least \$700 million in health care costs if more stringent state and federal chemical policy helped reduce Californians' exposure to toxic chemicals.

A new analysis released today, **“The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act,”** finds that the state has the opportunity to prevent rising rates of chronic disease and therefore reduce health care costs. Evidence is strong and growing that chemical exposures contribute significantly to the rise in many chronic diseases, according to this new report synthesizing peer-reviewed science and economic analyses.

As social services, including healthcare, are being slashed from California's budget, “The Health Case” documents the enormous health care costs of treating cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, asthma and other diseases and conditions linked to chemical exposure, according to recent studies. By implementing a strong Green Chemistry Initiative, coupled with similar reform at the national level, Californians would suffer fewer exposures to harmful chemicals and would save money to boot.

In California alone, conservative estimates show that reducing the incidence of these diseases by 0.1 percent could save over \$700 million in health care costs. “Good chemical reform policy is good fiscal policy,” says Pam Palitz, Environmental Health Advocate and Staff Attorney for Environment California. “We literally cannot afford the status quo when it comes to toxic chemical exposure.”

The primary federal law governing chemical safety is the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), which has never been significantly amended since its adoption in 1976. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson has identified comprehensive reform of the toxics law as a key Obama Administration priority, stating that the law fails to provide EPA with the authority it needs to ensure chemicals are safe. Of the 80,000 chemicals used in the U.S., EPA has been able to require safety testing on only 200. And 60,000 chemicals - including bisphenol A - were grandfathered in for use without any testing for health safety. New legislation to bring the toxics law into the 21st century will be introduced by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Rep. Bobby Rush (D-IL) in early 2010 with key committee leadership support from California's Senator Barbara Boxer and Congressman Henry Waxman.

California has led the way on addressing the chemical contribution to health problems. In 2007, Governor Schwarzenegger created the Green Chemistry Initiative to kickstart the green chemistry revolution in California, creating new jobs and economic opportunity in a way that is also healthy and transforms our materials economy. This led to the passage of AB 1879 and SB 509 in 2008 which would

create a clearinghouse of chemical information and create a regulatory process to move toward safer alternatives to toxic chemicals.

California's Department of Toxic Substances Control is crafting implementing regulation this year. "The jury is still out on whether the implementation will be something worth applauding or more of the same old, same old," says Ansje Miller, Policy Director for Center for Environmental Health and the Coordinator for Californians for a Healthy and Green Economy (CHANGE). "We are standing on the precipice in California. The implementing regulations will determine whether California consumers, workers, downstream manufacturers and users will have the information they need to make informed decisions about toxic chemicals in products, in our environment and in our bodies." While California has been a leader on this, more needs to be done both in California and in Congress.

The report summarizes a number of peer-reviewed studies that estimate the disease burden attributable to chemical exposure. These estimates vary widely, from five percent of childhood cancer to 30 percent of childhood asthma. Conservatively assuming that chemical policy reform were to reduce the contribution of toxic chemical exposures to chronic diseases by 0.1 percent, the resulting reduction in annual health care costs would amount to an estimated \$5 billion. The Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families coalition has estimated health care cost savings on a state-by-state basis, using census figures projected for 2020.

During the last 30 years, tens of thousands of peer reviewed studies have built a large body of evidence demonstrating that chemical exposure can cause and contribute to some of our nation's most serious health problems — from childhood cancer to infertility.

"This report confirms what we know: by reducing exposure to toxic chemicals, we will reduce disease incidence and the related health care costs," says Jeanne Rizzo, R.N., president of the Breast Cancer Fund. "And imagine the 'human savings'—the women who may never have to receive a breast cancer diagnosis, for instance. You can't put a dollar amount to that."

Leukemia and other childhood cancers have increased by more than 20 percent since 1975. A woman's lifetime risk of breast cancer is now one in eight, up from one in ten in 1973. Infertility affected 40 percent more women in 2002 than in 1982. The once-rare birth defect of undescended testicles in baby boys increased 200 percent between 1970 and 1993. Since the early 1990s, reported cases of autism spectrum disorder have increased tenfold.

"California's budget crisis has led to drastic cuts in health services, and the cost of healthcare is soaring across the nation. If we can prevent illness, save money, and save families, then we need to do it," says Martha Arguello, Executive Director of Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles. "Physicians advise patients on how to lead a healthy lifestyle, but no amount of physician consultation can prevent exposure to some of these toxic chemicals -- the government has an obligation to step in and make create public health protective policies."

The full report, a list of local experts, additional quotes, and California-based chemicals policy information is available at www.changealifornia.org. Follow us on Twitter, @changeCA.

A media teleconference on this report will take place Jan. 21 at 1 p.m. EST. Call in info is: 1-877-410-5657 Passcode: 31970

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