

# OPPOSE

## LD 930: Act To Clarify Maine's Phaseout of the "Deca" Mixture of Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers

**Sponsor:** Representative Dean Cray (R-Palmyra)

**Summary:** This bill would re-allow the use of toxic brominated and chlorinated flame retardants as substitutes for the banned deca-BDE in plastic shipping pallets and consumer products covered by our flame retardant laws – consumer electronics, mattresses and home furnishings.

**Explanation:** Halogenated flame retardants (HFRs) – including bromine based (BFRs) and chlorine-based flame retardants (CFRs) - have been widely condemned by scientists around the world because their chemical structure makes them long-lived in the environment and causes them to accumulate in people and wildlife as they move up the food chain.<sup>1</sup> What's especially alarming is their propensity to accumulate in human breast milk.<sup>2</sup> Scientists first discovered the environmental impacts of these chemicals in the 1990s when they discovered that compounds – in great similarity to the banned polychlorinated biphenol chemicals (PCBs) – were increasing exponentially in the environment, in wildlife and in human breast milk.<sup>3</sup> Further studies into the nature of these and other halogenated flame retardants determined that many of them are cancer-causing (carcinogenic), toxic to developing brains (neurotoxic), impair healthy reproductive development and can damage the thyroid, the endocrine (hormone) system and the central nervous system.<sup>4</sup>

**Exposure to these flame retardants occurs through diet, but also from the leaching of these chemicals into house dust from consumer products treated with HFRs.**<sup>5</sup> Because of the widespread scientific data demonstrating exposure and harm to humans and wildlife from halogenated flame retardants, several hundred research scientists from around the world have called on government agencies and product manufacturers to swiftly move away from these unnecessary, toxic flame retardants through the recently published San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants.<sup>6</sup>

The good news is that we can have fire safety, healthy people and a clean environment. We don't need to use these dangerous halogenated flame retardants. **There are safer technologies and chemicals that are widely available that meet the same fire safety standards without harming Maine families.**

This bill is being pushed by the Bromine Science and Environment Forum and Citizens for Fire Safety (trade association/front groups representing 4 bromine chemical manufacturers), the American Chemistry Council (chemical manufacturers trade association), and iGPS (a plastic pallet company currently using the banned, toxic brominated flame retardant, deca-BDE, and wanting to switch to new BFR). **While laws around the nation and world restricting dangerous halogenated flame retardants have led to their decline in consumer products, bromine chemical manufacturers have sought new markets for their toxic flame retardants including plastic shipping pallets used to transport everything from food to medicine to many consumer products.** Bromine chemical manufacturers have shifted away from manufacturing the widely banned deca-BDE flame retardant and have shifted toward using newly manufactured BFRs, which pose similar health threats to the banned chemicals.

**Maine law requires that manufacturers use safer alternatives to deca-BDE when replacing them in products. This bill would roll back that requirement, which is why NRCM opposes it.**

<sup>1</sup> Di Gangi, et al. Supplemental Material for "San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants." November 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The Basics of PBDEs. <http://www.ourstolenfuture.org/newscience/oncompounds/PBDE/whatarepbdes.htm>

<sup>4</sup> Di Gangi, et al. Supplemental Material for "San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants." November 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> DiGangi et al. "San Antonio Statement on Brominated and Chlorinated Flame Retardants." November 2010.