

# **EVERY FAMILY SHOULD HAVE A HOME FREE OF TOXIC CHEMICALS**

## **The Case for Reforming the Nation's Chemical Safety System**

**Our chemical safety system is badly broken.** Unnecessary dangerous chemicals are widely used in everyday products. These same hazardous substances cause widespread pollution in people. Tests show that humans, even newborn babies, are contaminated with common chemicals linked by the best scientific research to breast and prostate cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, infertility, diabetes and obesity, and other disorders. Rates of chronic diseases and health conditions are on the rise, in part many scientists believe as a result of environmental chemical exposures.

**The current federal law is outdated and ineffective.** In 1976, the federal Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) "grandfathered" more than 60,000 industrial chemicals in commerce. TSCA wrongly presumes that these chemicals are innocent unless the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proves harm. Yet in more than 30 years, EPA has ordered chemical manufacturers to test only 200 chemicals for their threat to human health and the environment, so the majority of chemicals remain untested. Of the few thousand chemicals that science shows for certain are dangerous, EPA has only banned or restricted the use of 5 toxic chemicals under TSCA. Meanwhile any test of human blood or household dust shows that people are exposed to hundreds of toxic chemicals that escape from everyday products or contaminate our food supply.

**Maine leads on safer chemicals policy, but can't go it alone.** In April 2008, Governor Baldacci signed legislation sponsored by Representative Hannah Pingree (D-North Haven) known as the Kid Safe Products Act (LD 2048). The bill establishes a first-in-the-nation comprehensive policy framework to require safer chemicals in products. LD 2048 requires adoption of a list of priority chemicals of high concern, shifts the burden onto manufacturers to disclose which dangerous chemicals are in products, and empowers the State to ban the use of priority chemicals if children are exposed and safer alternatives are available. Similar bills passed in Washington state and California, and are pending in Massachusetts and Minnesota. Recently, ten states including Maine joined together in an Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse to coordinate state action to regulate toxic chemicals and promote safer alternatives.

**Congress must act to fix our broken federal chemical safety system.** State action alone will not be enough to fully protect our health and environment. Soon, Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) and Representative Bobbie Rush (D-IL) are expected to reintroduce the Kid-Safe Chemicals Act in the first serious Congressional effort to modernize TSCA. The Kid-Safe Chemicals Act shifts the burden onto industry to prove the safety of their chemicals, takes immediate action to restrict the worse chemicals, and requires complete information on the health hazards of all chemicals. We need this Congress to reform chemical policy to protect the health of children and all Americans.