

2016 PSR Maine Position Paper on Toxics

“If we are going to live so intimately with these chemicals eating and drinking them, taking them into the very marrow of our bones - we had better know something about their nature and their power.” Rachael Carson

New chemical reform was signed into law in 2016 to replace the old Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The new law has many protections built in, but still falls short in a number of ways including restricting states from banning dangerous chemicals as long as they have been named by the EPA where they can sit for up to four years.

Today there are over 80,000 chemicals in the market. Many have never been tested for their impacts on human health. Our families, friends, and patients are often exposed to and left unknowing about the risks of hundreds of chemicals they encounter daily in their homes, schools, and workplaces. Many of those chemicals are considered trade secrets and many others are disguised using labels like fragrance. The scale is daunting.

More and more studies are finding links between diseases such as ADHD, asthma, certain cancers, and birth defects and chemicals like BPA, phthalates, and those found in furniture like flame retardants. The 2015 Endocrine Society scientific paper emphasizes the connection between endocrine disrupting chemicals like BPA and phthalates and disease.¹ BPA studies motivated states like Maine to ban BPA in baby bottles and sippy cups, and manufacturers have heard consumer concerns and voluntarily removed BPA from baby bottles. But the replacement chemical BPS is now causing concern. Some studies are suggesting it may be worse than BPA.

Our work is informed by the precautionary principle and a number of sources including but not limited to national PSR, Safer Chemicals Safer Families (a national partner) and our work in Maine with the Alliance for a Clean and Healthy Maine and the Environmental Health Strategy Center.

PSR Maine is committed to raising awareness about the adverse health effects of chemicals found in everyday products and to advocate for reforming public policy and law related to these chemicals. We strive to be an expert source in Maine of public health information about toxics and actively seek to work in partnerships and collaborations where our medical expertise is needed and where such partnerships enhance our work.

Our toxics mission is focused on educating Maine medical and healthcare professionals and students, citizens, and policy makers through our academic initiative and professional and community presentations. PSR Maine vigorously advocates for the adoption of chemical laws and public policy changes that protect human health through direct and grassroots lobbying efforts.

¹ EDC-2: The Endocrine Society’s Second Scientific Statement on Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals, A.C. Gore, et al, Endocrine Society Scientific Statement, 2015, <https://www.endocrine.org/endocrine-press/scientific-statements>