

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE MAY 19, 2009

Community Services

Members

In Attendance: Lois Bronz, Chair, Ken Jenkins, Vito Pinto, Jose Alvarado, Bernice Spreckman, Bill Ryan. Legislator Harckham, sponsor of the item.

In Attendance: CEO: Andrew Neuman BOL: Mary Jackson, Teresa Toscana, Joanne Sold, Sally Swift, Betsy Desoye, Christina Giliberti, Harry Spreckman, Chris Crane and Melanie Montalto Guests: Dr. Steven Hentges, Bobbi Chase Wilding, Michael Shade, Urvashi Rangan, Steve Rosario, Lorin Acusic.

Items Discussed: An introductory discussion on the possible dangers of the chemical bisphenol-A in baby products.

Minutes

Chairwoman Bronz called the Community Services Committee meeting to order at 3:19 P.M.

Dr. Urvashi Rangan of the Consumers Union discussed the hazards of Bisphenol-A in baby bottles and products with the Committee. She stated that the FDA set a threshold for BPA levels in 1988 based on animal studies with high doses of BPA. She stated that newer studies are showing developmental defects with lower levels of BPA. She said the Consumers Union has supported all of the legislation that has passed so far regarding BPA restrictions, and noted that many companies are moving away from BPA, producing BPA free products.

Legislator Myers asked if consumers can use the recycling numbers to tell if there is BPA in a product. Dr. Rangan informed the Committee that the recycling number is not mandatory on plastic products so it is an ongoing issue.

Steve Rosario, Director of the Northeast Region for the American Chemistry Council, and Dr. Hentger, also of the Council, spoke about the necessity of BPA in certain products because it helps with clarity and makes plastics stronger and shatterproof. They stated that the consensus around the world is that BPA is not a threat to human health. They stated that alternative chemicals are not as sturdy and that there is no science to prove that it is any safer than BPA. Mr. Rosario asked the Committee to keep two questions in mind, how can all these other countries possibly be wrong? And where will it stop if one chemical is banned? He stated that the manufacturers and retailers are pulling the products as a reaction to the public perception.

Mike Shade, PVC Campaign Coordinator for the Center for Health, Environment & Justice discussed his study of BPA and baby bottles with the Committee. A copy of the study is on file and available for review. He said that the study found that the BPA levels that leach in baby bottles have been found to cause defects in animal studies. He also asked the Committee, if there

are safer alternatives, why take the risk? He said the longer a plastic baby bottle is used the level of BPA being leached out increases. He said scientific evidence is increasingly showing that BPA is harmful, and many companies are moving away from it, including Nestle, Similac and Infamil who are selling formula in BPA free packaging. He said there is a concern for food and beverage containers because BPA has been found in breast milk and BPA is most harmful to children while they are developing.

Bobbi Chase Wilding, the Organizing Director for Clean New York, told the Committee that we have to put it into perspective. She stated that BPA is a synthetic estrogen and the CDC has linked BPA to diabetes. She said that a recent study on monkeys where exposure was done in the womb, showed that male monkeys were more likely to behave like female monkeys and their brains looked older at birth. She stated that studies conducted by chemical companies generally show no reaction to BPA while most other studies do.

Steve Rosario stated that BPA is like a scarlet letter for something that has not been proven to be unsafe.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Jenkins the minutes of April 21st and April 28th, 2009 were approved with a vote of 4-0.

Moved by Legislator Pinto and seconded by Legislator Jenkins the Committee on Community Services adjourned at 5:10: p.m.

A complete audio recording of the meeting is available for review upon request.