

Title: Resolution on Environmental Health

Policy Base: Christian Concern for an Economic Life in a Rapidly Changing Technological Society, Adopted by the General Board of the National Council of Churches USA Governing Board, February 26, 1966.

Toxic Pollution in the U.S.A.: With Special Concern for Its Impact on Poor and Minority Communities, Adopted by the National Council of Churches USA Governing Board, November 6, 1986.

Church and Children: Vision and Goals for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 2004.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A Policy on Human Biotechnologies, Adopted by the National Council of Churches Governing Board, November 8, 2006 in Orlando, Florida.

Rationale:

**Whereas** we recognize that we were “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139) and that our faith tradition calls us to care for our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 6:19-20). We are also called to treat our children as sacred (Matthew 18:2-4) and to provide for future generations. Sadly, studies have found that children carry a disproportionate toxic burden. Research indicates that newborns in the United States have an average of 200 toxic chemicals in their umbilical cord blood.<sup>1</sup>

**Whereas** asthma, cardiovascular disease,<sup>2</sup> obesity,<sup>3</sup> early childhood puberty, infertility, and cancer are linked to exposure to chemicals in products commonly found in households, and church buildings, and other related facilities. The Center for Disease Control found that more than 92 percent of Americans have bisphenol-a (a coating on polycarbonate plastics and food cans) in their blood, a chemical linked at low doses to cancer, obesity, type II diabetes, early puberty in girls,<sup>4</sup> and cardiovascular disease.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, studies have also detected 16 chemicals from cosmetics products in children and youth that are linked with health problems including cancer and hormone disruption.<sup>6</sup> Other studies have

---

<sup>1</sup> Environmental Working Group. Body Burden: A Benchmark Investigation of Industrial Chemicals, Pollutants, and Pesticides in Human Umbilical Cord Blood., 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/statistics.htm>. 10/24/08.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/obesity/index.htm>. 10/24/08.

<sup>4</sup> vom Saal, FS, *et al.* 2007. “Chapel Hill Bisphenol A Expert Panel Consensus Statement: Integration of mechanisms, effects in animals and potential impact to human health at current exposure levels.” Reproductive Toxicology 24:131-138.

<sup>5</sup> Calafat, Antonia M. , et al. Division of Laboratory Sciences, National Center for Environmental Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia, USA. “Exposure of the U.S. Population to Bisphenol A and 4-*tertiary*-Octylphenol: 2003–2004,” . Environmental Health Perspectives, Volume 116, Number 1, January 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Sutton, Rebecca. Adolescent Exposures to Cosmetic Chemicals of Concern. Environmental Working Group. Washington, DC. September 2008.

found a high presence of persistent, bioaccumulative chemicals, such as brominated flame retardants (which are linked to thyroid cancer, developmental delays, and hearing loss) in adults, children, newborns,<sup>7</sup> breast milk,<sup>8</sup> and Creation.<sup>9</sup> Diseases, learning and developmental disabilities, respiratory illnesses, and reproductive challenges have been linked with such chemicals as dioxins,<sup>10</sup> mercury,<sup>11</sup> lead,<sup>12</sup> perfluorochemicals,<sup>13</sup> formaldehyde,<sup>14</sup> and chemicals in cleaning products.

**Whereas** we are called to care for the “least of these” (Matthew 25:45). The United Church of Christ’s Race and Toxic Waste reports of 1987<sup>15</sup> and 2007<sup>16</sup> found that race, more than class determines the location and siting of toxic waste sites. Some cosmetics products marketed specifically to people of color contain particularly toxic chemicals.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, lack of access to fresh fruits and vegetables exposes low-income communities to toxic chemicals in aluminum cans and pesticides, which have been linked to hormone disruption.<sup>18</sup> Low-income persons, minorities, and non-English speaking residents are less likely to have the knowledge or resources to buy more-expensive and less-toxic alternatives to household items currently in use. Because these same populations are also less likely to have knowledge of and access to adequate preventive and responsive health care in the face of these exposures, these vulnerable populations, and especially their children, are doubly burdened by the impacts of toxic exposures.

**Whereas** the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976 was passed to create a framework to regulate our nation’s chemicals, and yet in the last thirty years the Environmental Protection Agency has used its authority to test only 200

---

<sup>7</sup> Lunder, Sonya, Anila Jacob. Fire Retardants in Toddlers and Their Mothers. Environmental Working Group. September 2008.

<sup>8</sup> She, J., et al. PBDEs in the San Francisco Bay Area: Measurements in Harbor Seal Blubber and Human Breast Adipose Tissue. *Chemosphere* 46(5):697-707 (2002).

<sup>9</sup> California Environmental Protection Agency Department of Toxic Substances Control. PBDE Levels in Falcon Egg Studies Highest Ever., May 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Eskenazi, Brenda, et al. “Serum Dioxin Concentrations and Risk of Uterine Leiomyoma in the Seveso Women’s Health Study.”, *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2007 166(1):79-87

<sup>11</sup> Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/tfacts46.html>. April 1999.

<sup>12</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Center for Environmental Health. <http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/lead/faq/about.htm>. October 2008.

<sup>13</sup> “PFCs: Global Contaminants.” Environmental Working Group. April 2003.

<sup>14</sup> Taskinen, Helena, et al. Reduced fertility among female wood workers exposed to formaldehyde. *Am J Ind Med*. 1999 Jul; 36(1):206-12.

<sup>15</sup> Lee, Charles. Toxic Waste and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites. New York, NY: Commission for Racial Justice, the United Church of Christ, 1987.

<sup>16</sup> Bullard, Robert, et al. Toxic Waste and Race at Twenty (1987-2007). Columbus, OH: United Church of Christ, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Maxwell, NI. Newton, MA: Silent Spring Institute, 2000 - library.silent.spring.org

<sup>18</sup> Farr, Sherry L. “Pesticide Exposure and Timing of Menopause.” *American Journal of Epidemiology*. 2006 163(8):731-742

Wozniak, Amy L., Nataliya N. Bulayeva, and Cheryl S. Watson. “Xenoestrogens at Nanomolar Concentrations Trigger Membrane Estrogen Receptor- $\alpha$ -Mediated  $Ca^{2+}$  Fluxes and Prolactin Release in GH3/B6 Pituitary Tumor Cells.” *Environmental Health Perspectives* Volume 113, Number 4, April 2005

chemicals and only 5 have been banned out of the 82,000 chemicals currently registered for use.<sup>19</sup>

**Whereas** the Food and Drug Administration has little authority and few resources to regulate chemicals in cosmetics; and companies are not required to reveal chemicals used in manufacturing, especially in fragrance, despite the fact that chemicals in fragrance have been linked to cancer, reproductive challenges, and early childhood puberty in girls.

**Therefore be it resolved that**

The National Council of Churches will promote educational materials and practical solutions for church bodies to promote healthy, less-toxic spaces for worship and sacred living.

The National Council of Churches will work to protect the most vulnerable members of society from exposure to harmful chemicals—pregnant women, children, communities of color, low-income communities, older adults and others with compromised immune systems, and people exposed to these chemicals in the workplace.

The National Council of Churches will work to protect Creation from toxic chemical exposure by engaging congregants in healthy lifestyle choices and public witness on behalf of Creation.

The National Council of Churches will share a prophetic witness to empower legislators and federal agencies to ban toxic chemicals of concern, repair the system we use to regulate chemicals, and ensure that the products we use are safe for all. We also encourage industry, government, faith bodies, and environmental health advocates to work together to create policies that promote a green, toxic-free economy. Through these efforts we can ensure a healthier future for the whole body of Christ.

Adopted by the Eco-Justice Working Group, March 31, 2009

---

<sup>19</sup> Government Accountability Office. [Chemical Regulation: Options Exist to Improve EPA's Ability to Assess Health Risks and Manage Its Chemical Review Program](#). 2005. 22.