

Date: April 13, 2017

To: The Honorable Rep. David L. Deen, *Chair*
House Committee on Natural Resources, Fish and Wildlife
115 State Street
Montpelier, VT 05633

cc: Rep. Mary Sullivan, *Vice Chair*
Rep. Steve Beyor, *Ranking Member*
Rep. David Ainsworth
Rep. Paul Lefebvre
Rep. James McCullough
Rep. Carol Ode
Rep. Trevor Squirrel, Clerk
Rep. Thomas Terenzini

From: Martin Wolf
Director, Sustainability & Authenticity
Seventh Generation, Inc.
Burlington, VT 05401

RE: Testimony in support of S.103 An act relating to the regulation of toxic substances and hazardous materials

Dear Representative Deen:

On behalf of Seventh Generation, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of S.103, an act relating to the regulation of toxic substances and hazardous materials.

Seventh Generation is the nation's leading brand of household and personal care products designed to help protect human health and the environment. Established in 1988, our Burlington, Vermont based company employs over 140 people, distributing products to natural food retailers, supermarkets, mass merchants, and online retailers across the United States and Canada.

Among the products manufactured and sold by Seventh Generation are laundry detergents, dish detergents, hand soaps, household paper products, baby diapers, baby wipes, and feminine hygiene products.

In October 2016, Seventh Generation was acquired by Unilever, a global manufacturer of consumer products dedicated to making sustainable living commonplace.

In presenting this testimony, I come before you as an employee of one of Vermont's successful, socially responsible businesses, as a chemist, which I have studied and practiced most of my adult life, as a father, and as a citizen of the State of Vermont who values its natural beauty and the delicate balance we are striving to achieve between maintaining that beauty and maintaining our economic vitality.

In 2016 the Vermont legislature passed Act 154 directing the Agency for Natural Resources to establish a working group of interested parties and parties with expertise in the field of toxic chemical use and regulation to develop recommendations for how to improve the ability of the State to:

- a) prevent citizens and communities in the State from being exposed to toxic chemicals, hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes;
- b) identify and regulate the use of toxic chemicals or hazardous materials that currently are unregulated by the State; and
- c) inform communities and citizens in the State of potential exposure to toxic chemicals, including contamination of groundwater, public drinking water systems, and private potable water supplies.

I was honored to be a member of that working group. Among the recommendations of the working group were those to:

- a) Strengthen Hazardous Substance Recordkeeping and Reporting Requirements;
- b) Increase Resources for Businesses and Strengthen Planning Requirements Under the Pollution Prevention Planning Program;

- c) Strengthen the Ability of the Department of Health to Prevent Exposure to Harmful Chemicals that Pose a Risk to Public Health;
- d) Improve Coordination and Collaboration Among Agencies Managing Hazardous Chemicals;
- e) Increase Public Access to Information About Chemicals;
- f) Strengthen Remedies Available to Vermonters to Address Violations of Pollution Laws and Exposure to Harmful Chemicals;
- g) Restrict the Use of Specific Chemicals that Pose a Risk to Public Health.

S.103 incorporates each of these recommendations, and exemplifies Vermont's commitment to protecting the health of its residents while building an infrastructure to support responsible local businesses.

Seventh Generation supports this sensible legislation for the following reasons:

This legislation will save money. Conventional business will, of course, object to “the cost of this burdensome legislation.” But conventional businesses look at cost in only a narrow way, looking at the proximate cost to their business. However, looking at costs through the broader lens of our society, rather than through the lens of costs only to business, it is clear this legislation is in the economic best interest of Vermont citizens.

Childhood exposure to toxic chemicals costs the US \$76.6 billion, annually.¹ On a prorated basis, this is a cost to Vermont of \$150 million in medical expenses to treat childhood disease related to toxic chemical exposure.² With an estimated 250 thousand households in Vermont, eliminating childhood exposure to toxic chemicals produces an estimated annual savings of \$600 per household.

In addition, by preventing hazardous chemicals from entering the environment, we are spared the cost of cleaning up our environment, and preventing widespread environmental contamination is always less costly than remediating such

¹ Trasande L and Liu Y. Reducing the staggering costs of environmental disease in children, estimated at \$76.7 billion in 2008. *Health Affairs*, May 2011, 10.1377.

² Divide \$76.7 billion by 323 million, the US population, and multiply by 625 thousand, the Vermont population. Population figures from www.census.gov.

contamination. We do not yet know the full cost of removing PFOA from groundwater around our State, but it is likely much higher than the cost would have been to prevent this contamination in the first place.

This legislation will ultimately save businesses money. S.103 recommends modernizing Vermont's data collection and reporting systems so businesses can more efficiently report on their chemical use. The legislation would also require expanded tracking of where chemicals are used in our State. Businesses are increasingly using tracking of all chemicals, not just identified hazardous chemicals, as a way of saving money. Businesses increasingly realizing that management of hazardous chemicals on a chemical-by-chemical basis is more expensive than creating a systemic solution. Hewlett-Packard, Seagate Technologies, and Global Foundries are each moving to systems that track all chemicals entering their facilities and their products so if a new substance of concern is identified, they already have the data to know which incoming materials contain the substance and which products and facilities are affected. The automobile industry has developed a similar system. The approach embodied in this legislation echoes this approach increasingly taken by businesses to save money and avoid disruption.

Regulation of toxic chemicals protects responsible Vermont businesses.

Seventh Generation already excludes thousands of chemicals from its formulation pallet. We will not use, and there is no need for us to use, substances that are known, or likely to cause cancer (National Toxics Program Report on Carcinogens), or substances known to the State of California to cause cancer or reproductive toxicity, or substances identified as persistent, bioaccumulating, and toxic by the US EPA.

Expanding Act 188 will help Vermont citizens identify products with hazardous chemicals, allowing them to reduce their exposure. By expanding Act 188 to all consumer products rather than just children's products, the Vermont legislature will protect Vermont citizens from a significant source of exposure to chemicals of concern, and protect responsible Vermont businesses from manufacturers willing to trade human safety for extra profit.

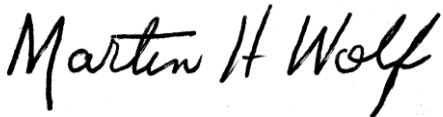
Regulation of toxic chemicals promotes innovation. Without this legislation, there is little reason for companies to innovate to create safer products. Passing

S.103 will help other companies to innovate as Seventh Generation has, while simultaneously reducing the risk of harm to Vermont citizens from chemicals of concern.

In summary, this proposed legislation is scientifically and economically sound, and would protect Vermonters from exposure to toxic chemicals and associated diseases, save the health care costs to treat and manage those diseases, reduce the cost of identifying sources of groundwater contamination, allow Vermont citizens to recover damages if harmed by hazardous chemicals, protect responsible Vermont businesses, and spur innovation to develop safer chemistries. This legislation would drive more competitive, innovative, and economically sustainable industries both within Vermont and beyond our borders.

Thank you for your attention to, and consideration of, these comments.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martin H Wolf". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Martin Wolf
Director, Sustainability & Authenticity
Seventh Generation, Inc.