



Memorandum

To: Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

From: Michelle Fay, Executive Director

Date: February 8, 2019

Re: S.55

Voices for Vermont's Children enthusiastically supports S.55, an act relating to the regulation of toxic substances and hazardous materials. The transparency and accountability provided by the policies proposed in S.55 are critically important for children's health and wellbeing.

When it comes to pollution and contamination, kids are canaries in the coal mine because they are especially vulnerable to the effects of toxins. Their brains and other organs are rapidly developing and highly susceptible to damage. Because they are at the beginning of their lifespan, there's more time for accumulation of toxic substances in their body. Impacts are significant for children, families, and society as a whole in the form of increased health care, education, and criminal legal system costs. Toxic exposure leads to increased risk of:

- childhood and other cancers;
- reproductive harm;
- learning disabilities and behavioral disorders; and
- chronic health conditions like obesity, asthma and more.

We should not be gambling with children's futures by allowing probable toxins in their products and environments, and at the very least, parents should be provided with all the information available to inform their decision-making.

Voices considers policy through an equity lens, which means assessing whether policies and resources are directed at addressing disparities. S.55 supports equity in public health by providing consumers with all relevant information about the products they are exposed to or choose for children in their lives. A comprehensive tracking and reporting system will help prevent fragmented responses that leave children at risk – especially low income children and children of color.

Voices applauds the legislature for prioritizing the health of our kids over the interests of polluters with S.55.