



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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February 1, 2024

Testimony of Rep. Lori K. Gramlich in opposition to

LD 2116, An Act to Require Flame-retardant Seats on New School Buses

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Good afternoon, Senator Chipman, Representative Crafts and esteemed members of the Transportation Committee. My name is Lori Gramlich, and I represent House District 131, the lovely seaside community of Old Orchard Beach. I am here to testify in opposition to LD 2116, An Act to Require Flame-Retardant Seats on New School Buses.

My work as House chair of the Environment and Natural Resources Committee has allowed me to become well-versed on the issue of toxic chemicals in the products that we use every day and the health and environmental impacts of these chemicals. I have worked hard over the past several years on legislation to help protect public health from a variety of toxic chemicals, including PFAS and phthalates. Flame-retardants are part of a long list of chemicals that are impacting the health of our children and our firefighters. Some of the more common chemical flame-retardants are linked to cancer, lower IQ and poor attention in children, hormone disruption, thyroid effects and obesity. Children are the most vulnerable to these health impacts. We should not be adding these to bus seats, which most children come into contact with on a daily basis.

In addition to the health impacts on children, firefighters are also impacted by the health effects of flame-retardants. Firefighters have higher rates of cancer than the general public, in part because of their exposure to toxic chemicals in flame retardants. A 2013 study by Dr. Susan Shaw, of the Marine Environmental Research Institute, found that levels of some flame-retardants in firefighters were two to three times those of the general population and the levels of dioxins in the blood were indicative of occupational exposure. Cancer caused 66 percent of the career firefighter line-of-duty deaths from 2002 to 2019, according to data from the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). We should be doing all we can to protect our brave firefighters, not increasing their exposure to chemicals that increase the risk of cancer.

In 2017, Maine became the first state to ban toxic flame retardants in furniture, in large part due to the health impacts on children and firefighters. We should not be taking a step backwards on this issue by adding flame-retardants to bus seats. These seats already have to meet federal safety standards, and there is no real evidence that additional flame-retardants will help protect our children. Therefore, I urge you to vote “ought not to pass” on LD 2116.