Launch of a Stakeholder Initiative to Seek Common Ground on Public Policies for Chemical Ingredient Transparency

Clean Production Action (CPA) and the Northeast Waste Management Officials Association’s (NEWMOA) Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse (IC2) are launching a partnership to find common ground among key stakeholders on chemical ingredient transparency policies and programs.

The diversity of transparency mandates at the state level has been steadily increasing for the past ten years. The States of California, Maine, New York, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington have enacted requirements for public disclosure of chemicals of concern in cleaning products and/or children’s products. Other states, including Connecticut, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington have established requirements for labeling products and packaging for the presence of mercury. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including the American Sustainable Business Council, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners, Center for Environmental Health, Clean and Healthy New York, Mind the Store Campaign, Safer States, and Toxic-Free Future are advocating for greater disclosure across supply chains. Retailers, including Walmart, have established requirements for ingredient disclosure by their suppliers. Ecolabels, such as the Safer Choice by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), require chemical ingredient transparency to meet their criteria.

These transparency initiatives confront similar types of challenges that often differ within and across product categories and sectors. Businesses that operate in multiple jurisdictions find it difficult to participate in or comply with the growing array of requests and requirements. Advocates and the public find it difficult to locate the chemical ingredient information in products they want when they need it. Businesses and government agencies developing environmentally preferable purchasing specifications are demanding chemical ingredient information and having to navigate and interpret the complex landscape of disclosure information that is available. These stakeholders – governments, businesses, NGOs, and researchers – could benefit greatly from a set of common principles and data practices.

Beginning in the second quarter of 2019 and extending into 2020, CPA and IC2 will convene businesses, governments, and NGOs to develop common principles and criteria for chemical transparency policy. By convening key stakeholders, we hope to accelerate state and local policy development, industry action, and government programs that focus on disclosure of toxic chemicals in products. Chemical ingredient transparency frequently is a catalyst for
companies to develop safer alternatives and avoid toxic chemicals in the first place, and it provides NGOs and governments with the knowledge of where toxic chemicals are used, thereby identifying priority chemicals for undertaking various policy actions.

According to Mark Rossi, Executive Director of CPA, “this partnership is an exciting opportunity to bring together the expertise of government agencies, businesses, NGOs, and researchers to accelerate the sharing of chemical ingredient information across business sectors, government programs, and NGO initiatives.”

Terri Goldberg, Executive Director of NEWMOA added, “CPA and IC2 have a long history of effective collaboration. Together, we bring unique and overlapping networks and capacities that will foster success in advancing chemical ingredient transparency in state and local policies, laws, and programs through this initiative.”

Funding for launching the initiative is provided by The New York Community Trust.

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