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Dr. Alfred Berg  
Chair, Committee to Review the Formaldehyde Assessment in the NTP 12th RoC

Dr. Jane Henney  
Chair, Committee to Review the Styrene Assessment in the NTP 12th RoC

March 19, 2013, 1:00pm  
Keck Center of the National Academies  
Room 110  
Washington, DC 20001

*Joint Meeting: Committee to Review the Formaldehyde Assessment in the NTP 12th RoC and the Committee to Review the Styrene Assessment in the NTP 12th RoC*

Drs. Berg and Henney, and other members of the Committees, thank you for hearing my testimony today.

My name is Mary Kearns, and I am the President and Founder of a personal care product company, Herban Lifestyle. I hold a PhD in Developmental Psychology, with a focus on Health, and have coordinated the scientific review of cancer prevention programs for the National Cancer Institute's Research-Tested Intervention Programs. I have also worked directly with people undergoing cancer treatment as a volunteer at Inova Hospital.

Herban Lifestyle's mission is to make the world a happier, healthier and better-smelling place. We do this by producing personal care products made with certified organic and Fair Trade ingredients, and without chemicals that are known or suspected carcinogens, teratogens, neurotoxins or endocrine disruptors. While my business does not utilize chemicals like Formaldehyde or Styrene, I rely upon the National Toxicology Program's assessment of chemicals, and feel that the Report on Carcinogens plays a critical role for businesses in making operational decisions.

Besides representing my own company, I am also here today representing the American Sustainable Business Council (ASBC). ASBC is a growing coalition of businesses and business organizations committed to advancing market solutions and policies that support a vibrant, just and sustainable economy. ASBC and its members represent over 165,000 businesses and more than 300,000 individual entrepreneurs, executives, and investors across the United States. This membership is comprised of a wide range of organizations, ranging from local and state chambers of commerce, to social enterprises and sustainable businesses, to investor and business incubators.

ASBC and its members believe that good science is an important foundation for innovation and business development, which in turn leads to job creation. For example, transparency in the reporting of potentially harmful chemicals allows businesses to create products that are safer for consumers. A safer marketplace helps to dispel consumer fears, spurs innovation, decreases legal liability, and increases shareholder value.

Many small businesses like mine have been experiencing growth despite the recent difficult economic conditions. This is attributable to consumers' increasing awareness of, and concern about, the extent of their exposure to chemicals. This has created a rapidly growing market for less toxic, more sustainable products. As a sustainable personal care products manufacturer, I rely on objective, up-to-date information for making choices regarding the ingredients that I use in my products.

The Report on Carcinogens (ROC) is a valuable source of information, allowing businesses to use solid scientific evidence to identify substances that are strongly suspected carcinogens. The argument that the ROC hurts business is disingenuous – it does not prevent companies from using any

particular substance, but rather allows them to make informed decisions regarding the chemicals and components used in the products they manufacture.

Approximately 80,000 chemicals are on the market in the United States today, most of which have never been evaluated for their potential health effects. Americans are exposed to many of these chemicals every day, and companies continue to use them in their products without consideration, or even awareness, of their effects on human health and the environment.

In light of the prevalence of potentially toxic chemicals in our environment, and our increasing understanding of the causal relationship between chemical exposure and chronic health problems, it should not be surprising that nearly one out of every two Americans born today will be diagnosed with cancer at some point during their lifetime<sup>1</sup>, with approximately 1.6 million being diagnosed in 2012 alone.<sup>2</sup> This represents a huge financial and emotional burden to individuals, business and society.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) estimated that in 2009, cancer cost the nation \$263.8 billion, including: health expenditures and other direct medical costs; and indirect costs associated with lost productivity due to illness and premature death.<sup>3</sup>

U.S. businesses should be able to trust that any product with chemicals marketed and promoted for use in the U.S. marketplace is safe. But our main chemical regulatory guidelines fall under the sadly outdated Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. Therefore, it is especially important for American businesses to enable independent scientific agencies, such as the National Institutes for Environmental Health Science (NIEHS), to provide objective information on chemical safety.

The identification of hazardous chemicals allows U.S. businesses to make the safer products consumers demand. U.S. businesses are finding it harder to compete with our trading partners in the European Union and Canada, whose leaders are creating stronger regulations to guarantee environmental health protections for their citizens.

Many businesses are working with scientists within government as well as our universities to design and manufacture safer chemicals and products. As consumers increasingly seek safer products for themselves and their families, a growing number of companies are working to meet this demand – both because they want to do the right thing, and because they know they can make greater profits in the long run.

This is not a partisan issue. A recent poll by ASBC<sup>4</sup> found that over 90% of small business owners, whether Republican or Democrat, believe that:

- Chemical companies should be responsible for ensuring that chemicals are safe prior to entering the marketplace;
- Companies using chemicals of concern should disclose their presence to the public; and
- There should be an easily accessible database, available to the public, identifying chemicals of high concern to human and environmental health.

These responses were fairly evenly divided across small business owners who self-identified as Republicans and Democrats.

I urge you to support government programs that provide public information related to environmental health. Small U.S. businesses will suffer the consequences from failure to identify dangers in chemicals. And, as someone who has worked directly with people undergoing cancer treatment, I urge you to consider the human costs of allowing chemical companies to put their interests before those of the public.

U.S. businesses need the best independent, publicly available scientific information to guide a marketplace where businesses, throughout their supply chain, and ultimately consumers, can trust that the chemicals in their products are safe.

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<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute, Surveillance Epidemiology End Results (SEER) Cancer Statistics Review

<sup>2</sup> American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts and Figures 2012. Atlanta (GA): American Cancer Society; 2012

<sup>3</sup> National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. NHLBI Fact Book, Fiscal Year 2008. (PDF-4.7MB) Bethesda (MD): National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute; 2009. The annual costs are broken down as follows: Direct medical costs, including health expenditures, \$102.8 billion; indirect costs associated with lost productivity due to illness, \$20.9 billion; and indirect costs associated with lost productivity due to premature death, \$140.1 billion

<sup>4</sup> *Toxic Chemical Reform Good for Business – New Poll*, American Sustainable Business Council (November 13, 2012), <http://asbcouncil.org/node/845>. The survey, “Small Business Owners on Toxic Chemicals: Findings From A National Online Survey of 511 Small Business Owners,” was conducted online by Lake Research Partners and the analysis was conducted by Bellwether Research. They used a geographically stratified sample of 511 small business owners across the U.S. The data were weighted slightly by gender, region, ethnicity, industry type and business size to match the sample to the national population of small business owners.

Thank you for your time and for the opportunity to present the small business perspective on the importance of continuing to provide the public with the annual Report on Carcinogens.

Thank you,  
Mary Kearns, PhD  
President and Founder  
Herban Lifestyle