

January 28, 2015

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Chairman
US House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member
US House Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Opposition to the Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency Act of 2015 (HR 526)

Dear Chairman Goodlatte and Ranking Member Conyers:

As both a mesothelioma widow and the President and Co-Founder of the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, I respectfully write to express my strong opposition to the Furthering Asbestos Claim Transparency (FACT) Act of 2015, HR 526.

Asbestos is a known human carcinogen that causes deadly cancerous diseases. Asbestos-related diseases kill at least 10,000 Americans every year. Yet, it remains a major public health hazard that severely affects too many American families. Notwithstanding these lethal exposures, the 2014 U.S. Geological Survey World Report confirmed that although Asbestos has not been mined in the United States since 2002, the U.S continues to import Asbestos to “meet manufacturing needs.”¹

These same manufacturing interests who for years hid the dangers of their lethal Asbestos products, are now asking Congress—under the guise of transparency—to impose new time and cost-consuming requirements on the asbestos trusts, grant asbestos defendants new rights to infringe upon victims’ privacy, and operate the trusts in a manner that will unduly burden asbestos victims and their families, without justification. I oppose the bill not only because it is both fundamentally unfair and discriminatory toward asbestos cancer victims, but because it is entirely one-sided, and seeks absolutely nothing in the way of increased transparency from the same industry that caused the largest man-made disaster in human history, and covered it up for years.

There is no justification for exposing families to the additional burdens set forth in HR 526. Information needed to verify the health of the trusts is already publicly available in a way that protects the privacy of the victims of asbestos

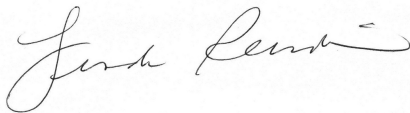
¹ U.S. Geological Survey, Mineral Commodity Summaries, February 2014 (available at: <http://minerals.usgs.gov/minerals/pubs/commodity/asbestos/mcs-2014-asbes.pdf>)

disease and their families. And trusts established by asbestos companies undergoing reorganization effectively compensate current and future asbestos victims while allowing business operations to continue. Trusts are designed to decrease litigation and costs, yet the proposed reporting requirements contained in the FACT Act work contrary to that very purpose. Instead, the FACT Act grants asbestos companies the right to require from the trusts any information they choose, at any time, and for practically any reason. The resulting delay in compensation will gravely impact patients' pursuit of medical care, negatively affects all victims of asbestos exposure, and effectively limits the justice they deserve. Accordingly, I am strongly opposed to the FACT Act, which creates even greater burdens for patients and families to overcome during an already extremely difficult time.

I am extremely disappointed that recent Congressional legislative efforts have focused on ways to limit the litigation designed to compensate victims, when the most obvious way to limit the impact of asbestos exposure is through increased public awareness of the dangers posed, and prevention. Americans need legislation that will stop the continued import of asbestos into our country, and prevent the continued expanse of environmental and occupational asbestos-related diseases. As consumers and workers, Americans deserve transparency to prevent exposure to asbestos, not to penalize victims.

More than 30 Americans die each day from a preventable asbestos-caused disease. On behalf of the American citizens, we urge you to take the time to hear from the victims of asbestos exposure and consider legislation that will protect public health, not legislation designed only to delay and deny justice for victims of asbestos exposure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Lewis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

President and Co-Founder, Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization