

January 15, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
H 222, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
House Majority Leader
H-148, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: House Consideration of Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act (H.R. 1603)

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

As supporters of H.R. 1603, the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act (ARBAN), we encourage you to schedule ARBAN for House Floor consideration as soon as possible. We were pleased to see the bill pass out of the Energy and Commerce Committee on November 19 with a bipartisan vote of 47-1. This strong bipartisan support is evidence of the compelling need to ban asbestos.

The bill is truly a milestone in the long fight to rid our society of asbestos, a known carcinogen that kills nearly 40,000 Americans every year. ARBAN will take long-overdue action to stop the import of hundreds of tons of raw asbestos and asbestos-containing products. It will also assess ongoing exposures to asbestos installed in buildings and infrastructure decades ago that continues to threaten public health and safety. Nearly 70 countries around the globe have already taken similar actions, and the Committee vote admirably brings our country closer to finally joining them.

As reported from the House Energy and Commerce Committee, ARBAN would accomplish several critical public health objectives:

1. Importation and use of asbestos and asbestos containing products would be banned within one year of enactment.
2. Fifteen chlor-alkali plants that now use asbestos diaphragms would stop importing asbestos and convert to non-asbestos technology following a ten-year transition period.
3. A new Right-to-Know program would require all importers and users of asbestos and asbestos-containing products during the last three years to inform both the EPA and the public of their activities, including where and how much asbestos has been used and how many people have been exposed.
4. The National Academy of Sciences would conduct a comprehensive study of risks presented by “legacy” asbestos often used in building construction decades ago that is still present in millions of residences, businesses, factories, public buildings, and schools across the country. This information will be used to recommend new policies to protect workers and the public from unsafe exposures.

5. The presence of asbestos contaminants in construction materials and consumer products subject to the bill would be prohibited if these impurities are present at 0.25% or more in construction materials and 0.1% or more in all other products.
6. The hazardous Libby Amphibole form of asbestos, found in attic insulation in millions of homes, would be covered by the ban.

Enacting these changes will save hundreds of thousands of lives from deadly asbestos-related diseases, including mesothelioma. To achieve these public health benefits, we urge you to schedule H.R. 1603 so that the House can expeditiously pass ARBAN.

Thank you again for your strong support for this landmark legislation.

AFL-CIO

American Public Health Association

Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization

Brazilian Asbestos Victims Association (ABREA)

Collegium Ramazzini

Environmental Information Association

Environmental Protection Network

GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer

International Association of Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers

Mavis Nye Foundation

Occupational Knowledge International

Public Citizen

Safer Chemicals Healthy Families

U.S. PIRG

CC: Rep. Frank Pallone
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici
Rep. Greg Walden
Rep. Paul Tonko
Rep. John Shimkus
Rep. Elissa Slotkin
Sen. Jeff Merkley