

Tuesday February 4, 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: Urge Passage of the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act (H.R. 1603)

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Majority Leader Hoyer:

We are scientists who have devoted our careers as researchers, teachers and government officials to combating the public health threat of asbestos. Asbestos causes numerous deadly diseases, including mesothelioma, lung cancer, asbestosis, and ovarian cancer. While asbestos use has declined since its height in 1973, the death toll from asbestos exposure remains alarmingly high, totaling nearly 40,000 Americans every year.

Because there is no safe level of exposure to asbestos, we and many of our colleagues have long recognized that the public will not be protected unless we ban all asbestos mining, importation and use. Nearly 70 countries around the world have already taken this step but the US has lagged behind. However, H.R. 1603, the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act (ARBAN), provides Congress with a unique opportunity to eliminate asbestos from US commerce.

In addition to banning the importation and use of asbestos and asbestos-containing products within one year of enactment, we strongly support the transition plan for the fifteen chlor-alkali plants that now use asbestos diaphragms. Under this plan, these plants will stop importing asbestos in five years and convert to non-asbestos technology within 10 years of enactment. A new Right-to-Know program would also 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. Finally, 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, stronger policies to protect workers and the public from unsafe exposures.

While recognizing that scientific understanding of the mineral composition and health effects of asbestos and asbestos-like fibers is evolving and may warrant a broader definition in the future, we believe the current definition will achieve the public health benefits of the bill. We support the efforts of government scientists to improve the definition of asbestos in order to inform future legislative and regulatory actions.

We urge you to bring H.R. 1603, a strong bill to protect public health, to the House floor as soon as possible with the goal of passing ARBAN on a bi-partisan basis and sending it to the Senate. Thank you again for your strong support for this landmark legislation.
Sincerely,

Henry A. Anderson, MD Adjunct Professor, Department of Population Health Sciences, Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, Madison, WI

Casey Bartrem, PhD, Executive Director, TerraGraphics International Foundation

Brad Black MD, Medical Director, Center for Asbestos Related Disease, Libby, MT

Barry Castleman, ScD, Environmental Consultant

Martin Cherniack, MD, MPH, Professor of Medicine, Co-Director, CPH-NEW, UConn Health

Richard Clapp, MPH, DSc, Professor Emeritus, Boston University School of Public Health

Devra Davis, PhD, MPH, fellow American College of Epidemiology, visiting professor of medicine at Hebrew University, and President Environmental Health Trust

John M. Dement, Ph.D., CIH, Professor Emeritus, Division of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, Department of Family Medicine & Community Health, Duke University School of Medicine

Denny Dobbin, CAPT USPHS (ret.)b

Richard M Duffy, Assistant to the General President (retired), International Association of Fire Fighters

Arthur L. Frank, MD, PhD, Professor of Public Health and Chair Emeritus of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at the Drexel University School of Public Health in Philadelphia

Dr. Laurence J. Fuortes, MD, Department of Occupational and Environmental Health
College of Public Health University of Iowa

David F. Goldsmith, MSPH, PhD, Professorial Lecturer, George Washington University
and Adjunct Associate Professor, Georgetown University, President, Workplace Health without Borders-US, Washington DC

Bernard D. Goldstein, MD, Professor Emeritus and Dean Emeritus, University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health

Robert Harrison, MD, MPH, Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of California, San Francisco, Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine

Peter F. Infante, D.D.S., Dr.P.H., Peter F. Infante Consulting, LLC

David Kotelchuck, PhD, MPH, Prof. Emeritus, Hunter College of the City University of New York

Philip J. Landrigan, MD, MSc, FAAP, Director, Program in Global Public Health and the Common Good, Director, Global Observatory on Pollution and Health, Professor of Biology, Schiller Institute for Integrated Science and Society

Joseph LaDou, MD, Emeritus Clinical Professor, University of California School of Medicine, San Francisco

Richard A. Lemen, PhD, MSPH, Assistant Surgeon General (Ret.), Rear Admiral, USPHS (Ret.)

Hester J. Lipscomb, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus, Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Department of Community Health and Family Medicine, Duke University Medical School, Durham, N.C.

Steven Markowitz MD, DrPH, Commoner Center, Queens College, CUNY (Institution is listed for affiliation purposes only)

David Michaels, PhD, MPH, Professor, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University Washington DC, and Assistant Secretary of Labor for Occupational Safety and Health (2009-2017)

Celeste Monforton, DrPH, MPH, Lecturer in Public Health, Texas State University*, and Fellow, Collegium Ramazzini

L. Christine Oliver, MD, MPH, MS, Adjunct Professor, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, University of Toronto, Toronto, ON

Peter Orris, MD, MPH, Professor and Chief, Occupational and Environmental Medicine, University of Illinois Hospital and Health Sciences System

Carol Rice, PhD, CIH, Professor Emerita. University of Cincinnati, Department of Environmental Health

Knut Ringen, DrPH, MHA, MPH, Occupational Health Consultant

Anthony Robbins, MD, MPA, Professor of Public Health, Tufts University School of Medicine, and Director of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (1978-1981)

Kenneth Rosenman MD, Professor of Medicine, Chief, Division of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Michigan State University

Sheldon W. Samuels, Executive Vice President, The Selikoff Fund for Occupational and Environmental Cancer Research

Leslie Thomas Stayner, PhD, Professor of Epidemiology, Division of Epidemiology & Biostatistics,
University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health

Daniel Thau Teitelbaum, M.D., Adjunct Professor, Environmental and Occupational Health, Colorado
School of Public Health, Aurora, Colorado

Margrit von Braun, PhD, PE, Professor and Dean, Emerita , University of Idaho

David H Wegman, MD, MSc, Professor Emeritus, Department of Work Environment, UMass Lowell and
Adjunct Professor Harvard School of Public Health

Laura Welch, MD, Visiting lecturer, George Washington University School of Public Health and Health
Services

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