

STATEMENT OF BOB SUSSMAN ON EPA ASBESTOS RISK EVALUATION

My name is Bob Sussman. I'm counsel to ADAO and was a senior EPA official in the Clinton and Obama Administrations.

Asbestos is not any chemical but a uniquely hazardous substance that has taken the lives of over a million Americans. There is a compelling need to inform the public about this enormous threat to public health, but the draft EPA evaluation ignores critical aspects of asbestos exposure, disregards known health effects and greatly understates risks.

This is the first comprehensive evaluation of asbestos in 35 years. Unfortunately, EPA's approach is a giant step back from the high-quality science in previous assessments -- it basically walks away from the long-standing risk assessment framework that government scientists worked hard to develop and has guided asbestos prevention policy for three decades.

In 2008, an effort to alter this framework was rejected by the EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB). Now, however, this discredited approach is resurfacing in EPA's calculation of the all-important Inhalation Unit Risk (IUR). I won't get into the details, but the bottom line is that the EPA IUR results in a considerably lower cancer risk than EPA's 1988 IRIS assessment. At a time when we should be eliminating asbestos exposure, this is not where we want to be.

EPA is also shockingly uninformed about the specifics of asbestos use and exposure. The draft evaluation repeatedly admits EPA has virtually no information on the asbestos-containing products that we import -- including the quantities, the number of end-users and the sites where asbestos exposure occurs. ADAO petitioned EPA to use its authority under TSCA to require industry to report this information but EPA refused. Now we are seeing the consequences of this self-created information void.

Finally, while some say that the remaining active uses of asbestos are insignificant, the risk evaluation paints a different picture, indicating that nearly one million workers are exposed to asbestos from these uses and up to 32 million "do it yourself" consumers replace asbestos brake pads and clutches. This is without considering the many millions of Americans exposed to legacy asbestos, which is excluded from the evaluation.

Because of the evaluation's many flaws, it's hard to have confidence that this EPA will take aggressive action under TSCA to eliminate asbestos exposure. The only serious path forward is action by Congress. That's why ADAO is working hard to support enactment of the Alan Reinstein Ban Asbestos Now Act. Congress must pass this vital legislation without delay.