



## **EPA's Draft Asbestos Risk Evaluation is Dangerously Narrow**

Statement of Liz Hitchcock, Director

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Good afternoon and thank you for joining us. My name is Liz Hitchcock, and I direct Safer Chemicals Healthy Families. Throughout the legislative campaign to reform TSCA, we led a coalition of health, consumer, environment, and business organizations to make the case for a reformed law that protects public health from hazardous chemicals in our homes and workplaces.

I'm proud to say that one of our most effective and tenacious coalition partners was the Asbestos Disease Awareness Organization, led by Linda Reinstein.

Let's start with a little review

Hundreds of groups joined us in our campaign for a more health protective chemical policy because TSCA was universally recognized as broken and ineffective.

TSCA is a tough law to explain to the general public and explaining what was wrong with it got really complicated really fast.

One of the best ways for the public to get our heads around the problem we faced with TSCA was the story of how EPA tried and tried and couldn't even ban asbestos under the law. The public understands the dangers of asbestos – with thousands of Americans dying from illnesses connected to asbestos exposures each year, we all know someone who has lost someone they love.

The failure to protect us from asbestos became a symbol of TSCA's failure to protect us from other toxic chemicals.

So when the Lautenberg Act was finally passed, it gave EPA the tools they needed to do the job of protecting us from one of the most dangerous substances known.

**But here's the thing** – The story of "old" TSCA was that EPA **could not** protect our families from asbestos. The story of "new" TSCA under the Trump Administration is that EPA **will not** protect us from this deadly chemical.

Unfortunately, it seems that EPA is leaving the shiny new and improved tools they got in reformed TSCA out to rust in the rain.

For decades, asbestos was everywhere -- in our homes, schools, public buildings, offices, stores, and factories all across America.

Asbestos remains in the built environment where it continues to pose a threat to public health to this day.

Up until a few minutes ago, I was listening to a jackhammer outside my house, because they're renovating the apartment building across the street. That's not unusual in DC.

Today it's a loud reminder that, as buildings are torn down or gutted to make way for new construction, asbestos waste is generated and disposed of in the U.S. in significant quantities. That asbestos waste in commerce, at landfills and construction sites puts workers and the public in significant danger.

They aren't the only ones exposed. As you heard from my friend Pat Morrison, Firefighters face greater risks from asbestos- exposures and related diseases.

School teachers, especially in elementary and middle schools, are at higher risk of mesothelioma than the general population—because of widespread presence of asbestos in schools built in the 1960s and 1970s.

The asbestos risk evaluation is an important tool to update our understanding of the prevalence of legacy asbestos and its risk. Without this important information, how can we protect those of us at risk of exposure?

We were so concerned by early indications that EPA would not meet its obligations under TSCA that we filed our first-ever lawsuit, to compel EPA to address the use and disposal of "legacy" asbestos in its risk evaluation.

The good news is that the court agreed with us and our colleagues.

The bad news is that EPA's draft risk evaluation fails to address the risks of legacy asbestos.

The American public expected and deserved better from "new" TSCA.

EPA should set the stage for a comprehensive asbestos ban by including **all** uses in its risk evaluation, including legacy uses where we live and work across the US.