

I have a photograph at home of my twins taking a bath together when they were 8 months old. They are smiling & splashing in the tub with their rubber duckies in their mouths. I used to love this picture, and now I cringe every time I look at it. That is why I am here today, to talk about the importance of passing LD 2048 and getting some of the worst toxic chemicals out childrens' toys.

What I did not know at the time we took the photo, was that those cute little rubber ducks contain phthalates- toxic chemicals that are now linked to hormone and reproductive problems as well as to developmental and learning disabilities. This is just one common toy and one of many known toxic chemicals that show up in everyday children's products.

In my work as a Pediatric Nurse, I see the effects of toxic chemical exposure. There has been a documented increase in the incidence of diabetes, seizure disorders and autism in children. I am frustrated by how many of these dangerous chemicals continue to be used when safer alternatives are available.

It is time for something to be done!

While passing this bill will not solve this growing problem, it is a sensible first step toward protecting our kids from toxic chemicals. LD 2048 is simple. It makes use of the best science already available, to identify the worst of the worst toxic chemicals found in

childrens products. Then it requires safer alternatives to be used if they are reasonably available. At the same time, it provides much needed information to consumers and retailers, while engaging Maine in a cooperative effort with other states, to help fill the gaps in our broken chemical safety system.

As a mother, I want to be certain that our next generation of babies isn't put at needless risk like mine have been. As a nurse, I want to help break the cycle we are all seeing: of more & more children experiencing preventable health problems and the spiraling health costs associated with them. Children are not "small adults": they have brains, livers, kidneys, pancreas, hearts and lungs that grow at an alarmingly rapid rate. Repeated exposure to toxins during this critical stage is detrimental to their growth and development.

The bottom line is this: Our kids should not be put at risk every time they pick up their favorite toy.

I am pleased to be here today to see this important bill highlighted by the Environmental Priorities Coalition and I urge legislators to pass it. We are counting on you to take leadership on this issue and help us protect our children.

Sandra Armington RN, BSN