

**Testimony of Molly Jones Gray,  
To the Senate Environment and Public Work's Committee  
February 4<sup>th</sup> 2010**

It is my pleasure to be here. My name is Molly Jones Gray. I come here before you today as a concerned mother. I recently participated as one of the women in a Washington Toxics Coalition study called "Earliest Exposures." This was a study of pregnant women to investigate what toxins our developing fetuses were exposed to during pregnancy.

**Earliest Exposures- A research study by WA Toxics Coalition**

The study tested for phthalates, mercury, PFC "Teflon chemicals", flame-retardants, and BPA. Many of these substances are known to cause adverse health effects such as reproductive problems, cancer, hormone disruption, and impaired neurodevelopment. My results were higher than the national average in many of the substances tested. In fact, I had the highest mercury of all the pregnant women tested.

During the five years preceding the study, I struggled with fertility and repeated miscarriages. As I searched for an answer to why I was having such a hard time bringing a child to term, I discovered the connection between our external environment, chemical exposures and their effect on our health, particularly reproductive systems. At that time, I made reasonable changes in my life to reduce my exposure to toxic chemicals from all routes of entry- air, food, drink, and skin. I did my very best to eat organic food, low mercury seafood and use personal care products without phthalates and fragrances.

**Personal Reflection on My Test Results**

When I first heard of the study about chemicals in pregnancy, I was extremely interested in participating. I wanted to see if my best intentions made a difference. The answer I received was incredibly disheartening. I was shocked that my levels were as high as they were. I learned that this fight to avoid toxins is larger than one person alone! These chemicals are ubiquitous in the environment and as clean as I tried to be, it was not enough to protect my baby boy.

Mother's- to- be can make many choices to ensure a healthy baby- we can take prenatal vitamins, exercise, avoid cigarettes and alcohol, and eat healthy diets. I am disappointed that with all of the choices we are able to make we do not have a choice to protect our children from the powerful influence of toxic chemicals on their developing bodies.

Now that my son is 7 months old, people often ask me if my son is healthy. My answer to that is as far as I know he is a healthy happy boy. My concerns are of the unknown. We have no idea what the long-term health implications of these

results are and I do not want my precious son or other children to be our scientific experiment.

### **Changes Needed to Protect All Children**

Developing babies are uniquely vulnerable to insult as they are developing at a rapid pace. Toxic exposures at crucial points in development could affect the wellbeing for a lifetime. In addition, fetuses have been found to have immature detoxification pathways. They cannot clear toxins as well as adults.

Something is wrong when I, as an educated consumer, am unable to protect my baby from toxic chemicals. I and all other parents should be able to walk into stores and buy what we need without winding up with products that put our families' health at risk. Now that I've learned that companies can put chemicals into products without ever testing for whether they harm our health, I think we need to change our laws.

On behalf on my son Paxton and all other children, I am asking for your help to lower our body burdens of chemicals that come between us and our health.

In order to do that I am asking Congress to take immediate steps to eliminate the use of persistent toxic chemicals — those that build up in our bodies or are passed on to the next generation. Legislation should also reduce the use of chemicals that have known serious health effects and ensure that only the safest chemicals are created and used in everyday products. Finally, we need standards that protect our most vulnerable populations like pregnant women and developing fetuses.

### **Conclusion**

I am disappointed that toxic chemicals like the ones found in my body in pregnancy are in our environment, our personal care products, our clothes, our furniture, our baby toys, and our food. Babies deserve to grow and develop in a healthy environment, in utero and out. But babies are born everyday already exposed to toxins linked to serious health problems. Safe until proven harmful is not good enough for my baby or me. I want our country to value the lives of its children the same way I value and love my son. It will take time to rid our population of this burden on our bodies- we need to start now. This is not my story alone—this is the story of all of our children, grandchildren and future generations. Thank you for this opportunity to tell my story.