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July 31, 2017

Scott Pruitt
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Dear Administrator Pruitt:

At our meetings in May 2015, October 2015, and October 2016, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council received extensive information and public testimony requesting that the Environmental Protection Agency, in conjunction with other federal agencies, address toxic exposures found at discount retail stores. Discount retail stores (commonly called “dollar stores”) are often the only source of affordable household products and food in many communities already impacted by environmental justice issues. These stores may negatively impact the communities they serve by selling products containing hazardous chemicals, including lead in toys and jewelry and phthalates and other endocrine disruptors in packaging. Most communities impacted by environmental justice issues cannot simply shop their way out of exposure to toxic chemicals in everyday products, toys, and food, because many of these dollar stores do not stock safer alternatives.

Fortunately, there are steps that federal agencies can take to help vulnerable environmental justice communities reduce toxic exposures from discount stores listed below:

1. We recommend that the EPA partner with discount retail stores to implement the Safer Choice program at discount retail stores around the country. We recommend that the Safer Choice program be a gateway program that leads discount retail stores to adopt comprehensive toxic policies to reduce toxics in their products and increase transparency of information available for consumers.
2. We recommend that the EPA work closely with other federal agencies to address the toxic exposure issues presented by discount retail stores. The process should include:
 - o The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), regarding phthalates and BPA in food packaging and food containers, among other issues.

- The Department of Agriculture (USDA), regarding food insecurity and the need for dollar stores to stock fresh produce and healthier foods.
 - The Department of Justice (DOJ), regarding enforcement, especially Civil Rights issues related to discrimination associated with the number of toxic products sold at these stores, the number of unhealthy and toxic products being sold to vulnerable populations such as children, and the number of toxic products sold in these stores above acceptable limits.
 - The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), regarding phthalates, lead, and possibly other toxics in children's products sold in dollar stores.
3. Establish or prioritize grant funding, potentially either through the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention or the Office of Research and Development, to support projects working to engage discount retailers on issues of chemical exposure in products and access to healthy alternatives.
 4. Within six months, provide a progress update to the NEJAC (to be shared publicly with communities impacted by environmental justice issues) with a final report within one year that specifies the actions that EPA and other agencies will take, a timeline for implementation, and an ongoing schedule for reporting progress and challenges to the NEJAC and communities impacted by environmental justice issues.

Thank you for your leadership and your attention to the needs and concerns of communities impacted by environmental justice issues and their constituencies. We look forward to hearing about the EPA's response to these recommendations, and receiving the requested report and timeline for implementation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Moore', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Richard Moore
Chair

cc: NEJAC Members

