March 10, 2025

Honorable Members of the Legislature, thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony regarding Rhode Island House Bill 5704. This bill aims to address the public health threat posed by rodenticides, particularly for children who bear a disproportionate burden of harm. In the following remarks, I will outline the data on rodenticide poisonings, the environmental impact of these chemicals, and the urgent need for legislative action to safeguard the health of our communities and children.

Rodenticides pose a clear threat to public health and safety, especially for children, who are disproportionately impacted by accidental ingestion. National data show over 72,000 rodenticide poisoning cases in 2023 alone, with nearly half affecting children (Gummin, et al, 2024). Here in Rhode Island, emergency department records indicate 22 emergency room visits for rodenticide ingestion from 2018 through 2023, most involving children (RI Hospital Discharge Data 2016-2023). Such incidents inflict preventable harm on families, including both health risks and financial burdens. By passing Rhode Island House Bill 5704, we can effectively prevent these needless harms and provide safer environments.

While effective rodent control is certainly essential, the use of anticoagulant rodenticides is neither efficient nor sufficiently targeted to accomplish this goal. They persist in the environment and have been detected in wastewater effluent (Gómez-Canela, 2014). They pose a danger to other organisms in the environment including humans and pets. Children, in particular, are at increased risk, due to higher exposure and greater vulnerability to rodenticides' effects. Children have smaller bodies than adults and therefore ingestion of rodenticides has a greater impact on them metabolically compared to adults. For example, after eating the same meal, adults may absorb 20% of ingested lead while children will absorb 50% (UCSF Pediatric Environmental Health e-Toolkit for Prevention). Children play on the floors where we also put rodenticides. Children put all kinds of objects without discernment in their mouths as a means to explore and interact with their environment, and most importantly, they rely on adults to provide a safe environmental Health e-Toolkit for Prevention). Passing house bill 5704 will provide a safe environment for all children in Rhode Island.

Use of anticoagulant rodenticides in particular may be causing more harm than good. Rodents interact with humans in all types of environments from urban to agricultural ones. While the purpose of rodenticides is to control rodent populations, researchers have found that anticoagulant rodenticides take 5-10 days to result in death. During the time period from ingestion until death, they disrupt the rodents' immune function, contributing to increased infection by bacterial pathogens like Leptospira, as well as the spread of these pathogens from rodents to humans (Murray & Sánchez, 2021).

As a mom, I have intentionally chosen to not use anticoagulant rodenticides in my home. The risk of an accident to my children and pets is too great of a burden to bear especially considering

there are other effective methods of rodent control readily available to us. Physical traps, for example, pose much less harm to my children and pets but are an immediate, targeted and very effective method. The harms from anticoagulant rodenticides vastly outweigh their benefit.

I respectfully urge you to pass House Bill 5704 to protect the health and safety of Rhode Island's children, families, and the environment. The evidence is clear that anticoagulant rodenticides pose preventable risks through accidental poisonings and environmental contamination. By prioritizing safer and more effective measures to control rodents, we will safeguard our communities from needless harm while still addressing a legitimate public health concern. Thank you for your consideration and your commitment to the health and welfare of all Rhode Islanders.

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