

The Louisville Charter for Safer Chemicals

Fundamental reform to current chemical laws is necessary to protect children, workers, communities, and the environment. We must shift market and government actions to protect health and the natural systems that support us. As a priority, we must act to phase out the most dangerous chemicals, develop safer alternatives, protect high-risk communities, and ensure that those responsible for creating hazardous chemicals bear the full costs of correcting damages to our health and the environment.

By designing new, safer chemicals, products, and production systems we will protect people's health and create healthy, sustainable jobs. Some leading companies are already on this path. They are creating safe products and new jobs by using clean, innovative technologies. But transforming entire markets will require policy change. A first step to creating a safe and healthy global environment is a major reform of our nation's chemicals policy. Any reform must:

Require Safer Substitutes and Solutions

Seek to eliminate the use and emissions of hazardous chemicals by altering production processes, substituting safer chemicals, redesigning products and systems, rewarding innovation and re-examining product function. Safer substitution includes an obligation on the part of the public and private sectors to invest in research and development of sustainable chemicals, products, materials and processes.

Phase Out Persistent, Bioaccumulative, or Highly Toxic Chemicals

Prioritize for elimination chemicals that are slow to degrade, accumulate in our bodies or living organisms, or are highly hazardous to humans or the environment. Ensure that chemicals eliminated in the United States are not exported to other countries.

Give the Public and Workers the Full Right-to-Know and Participate

Provide meaningful involvement for the public and workers in decisions on chemicals. Disclose chemicals and materials, list quantities of chemicals produced, used, released, and exported, and provide public/worker access to chemical hazard, use and exposure information.

Act on Early Warnings

Act with foresight. Prevent harm from new or existing chemicals when credible evidence of harm exists, even when some uncertainty remains regarding the exact nature and magnitude of the harm.

Require Comprehensive Safety Data for All Chemicals

For a chemical to remain on or be placed on the market manufacturers must provide publicly available safety information about that chemical. The information must be sufficient to permit a reasonable evaluation of the safety of the chemical for human health and the environment, including hazard, use and exposure information. This is the principle of "No Data, No Market."

Take Immediate Action to Protect Communities and Workers

When communities and workers are exposed to levels of chemicals that pose a health hazard, immediate action is necessary to eliminate these exposures. We must ensure that no population is disproportionately burdened by chemicals.

Dates must be set for implementing each of these reforms. Together these changes are a first step towards reforming a 30-year old chemical management system that fails to protect public health and the environment. By implementing the Louisville Charter and committing to the innovation of safer chemicals and processes, governments and corporations will be leading the way toward a healthier economy and a healthier society.