

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 23, 2019

Mr. Andrew Wheeler
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We write to express our alarm after learning that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) disregarded the advice of its own scientists and lawyers by issuing a rule that restricted but did not ban asbestos.¹

In a memo written by your own staff in August 2018, they stated, “Rather than allow for (even with restrictions) any new uses for asbestos, EPA should seek to ban all new uses of asbestos because the extreme harm from this chemical substance outweighs any benefit — and because there are adequate alternatives to asbestos.”²

Yet, on April 17, 2019, the EPA issued a new rule that “strengthens the agency’s ability to rigorously review an expansive list of asbestos products that are no longer on the market before they could be sold again in the United States.”³

We find it incredibly concerning and extremely peculiar that the EPA would cede its own experts’ advice on banning asbestos, a known human carcinogen that has killed millions of people over the last several decades.⁴

To that end, we respectfully request information regarding why the EPA chose not to ban asbestos since your own agency has acknowledged that there are existing adequate alternatives. We would appreciate your prompt attention to this request, as too many lives have already been taken by this harmful carcinogen and your own agency has the authority to put a stop to these preventable deaths.

¹ Friedman, Lisa, *New York Times*, “E.P.A. leaders disregarded agency’s experts in issuing asbestos rule, memos show,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/08/climate/epa-asbestos-rule-scientists.html>

² <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenthelper/815-e-p-a-memos-on-asbestos/12c87a96be998db10048/optimized/full.pdf>


³ EPA, “EPA strengthens regulation of asbestos to close loophole and protect consumers,” <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-strengthens-regulation-asbestos-close-loophole-and-protect-consumers>

⁴ National Cancer Institute, “Asbestos Exposure and Cancer Risk,” <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/substances/asbestos/asbestos-fact-sheet#q1>

taken by this harmful carcinogen and your own agency has the authority to put a stop to these preventable deaths.

Please do not hesitate to contact Alex Schnelle in Representative Steve Cohen's office at 202-225-33265 or alex.schnelle@mail.house.gov, if you have any questions related to this request.


Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Betty McCollum
Member of Congress


Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress


Peter DeFazio
Member of Congress


Darren Soto
Member of Congress


Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress


Pramila Jayapal
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Linda T. Sánchez
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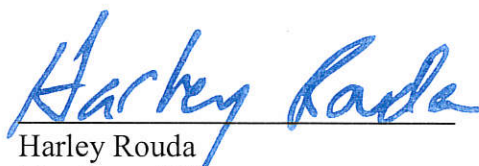
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Member of Congress



Albio Sires
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Julia Brownley
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Harley Rouda
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Raúl Grijalva
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Tim Ryan
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