

JACK N. GERARD
PRESIDENT AND CEO



July 15, 2005

Kenneth A. Cook, President
Environmental Working Group
1436 U Street, NW
Suite 100
Washington, DC 20009

Dear Mr. Cook,

As a father of six children, I am keenly interested in efforts to protect the health of children. So I read your July 14, 2005 letter and announcement with some consternation.

America's chemical makers help create essential and often life-saving products that have helped billions of children – including my children – live healthier, safer lives. The member companies of the American Chemistry Council have an abiding interest in and commitment to producing products in a manner that is protective of the health of children.

I consequently found your organization's announcements on substances detected in umbilical cords to be unbecoming the critical issue of children's health. This is an important issue that deserves a sober, reasoned discussion by all interested parties.

The announcements added little if anything to the scientific discussion of the safe use of chemicals. While presenting the findings as groundbreaking may grab attention, it does not advance the health and well being of children. Indeed, your announcements in my view may well frighten the parents of newborns.

Scientists have long understood that our bodies can absorb substances – natural and manmade – present in our environment. Scientists are not surprised to learn that chemicals can be measured in cord blood, just as they are not surprised to learn that chemicals can be detected in the blood of adults.

Scientists also know that detection of a chemical is not an indication of a risk to health and should not be raised as a cause for alarm. Researchers in this area echo CDC: "The measurement of an environmental chemical in a person's blood or urine does not by itself mean that the chemical causes disease." CDC scientists have worked diligently to communicate biomonitoring data in the proper perspective – I believe your announcements did a disservice to their efforts.



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As you are aware, ACC supports biomonitoring as part of a public health program that measures exposure to natural and man-made substances. I would hope in the future to see your organization play a more positive role to advance a balanced approach that uses methods for testing developed by CDC, that relies on independent scientific groups (such as the National Academy of Sciences) to help society understand how to use biomonitoring information and that focuses on real health threats from the broader environment, not unproven health claims.

ACC also supports efforts to organize and fund the National Children's Study (NCS), a long-term national study to examine the effects of physical, chemical, biological and social factors on the health and development of American children. Biomonitoring will play a key role in the NCS, as well, and we would welcome your organization's public support for this important study.

The benefits of chemistry have helped all of us live longer and healthier lives. These advances should not be underestimated or undermined by scaring people about everyday products that protect our health, keep us from harm and contribute to our well being.

Sincerely,



Jack N. Gerard