

September 26, 2017

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable John Barrasso  
Chair  
Comm. on Environment and Public Works  
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20510

Senator Thomas R. Carper  
Ranking Member  
Comm. on Environment and Public Works  
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C., 20510

Dear Senators Barrasso and Carper:

As organizations committed to protecting reproductive rights, health, and justice, we are writing to express our concerns regarding the nomination of Michael Dourson to head the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Mr. Dourson has long worked with corporations and industry groups to downplay or dismiss the harmful health effects of chemical industry products and, in particular, the risks these products pose to reproductive health.

Mr. Dourson has sought to weaken chemical safety standards on behalf of industry clients, yet he has been nominated to a position charged with establishing government safety standards for those very chemicals. Specifically, he has argued for weaker safety standards for chemicals linked to harm to individuals' reproductive health, such as 1-Bromopropane, TCE, and flame retardant chemicals. If confirmed, Dourson would be charged with establishing government safety standards for these chemicals, all of which are slated for EPA action in the next few years. Mr. Dourson also has a long record of proposing weaker safety standards for pesticides, many of which can interfere with the developing brain of children who were exposed to the chemicals in utero or as infants or toddlers. And the chemicals Mr. Dourson would be charged with regulating have been linked to a host of reproductive harms, including infertility, cancer, and even the early onset of puberty.

While all people can be harmed by dangerous chemicals, the risks are not shared equally. People of color and people who are struggling to make ends meet are more likely to be exposed to hazardous chemicals or conditions, including chemical spills and disasters, than other groups. People of color also are more likely to work in industries in which they are exposed to toxic chemicals. Migrant farm workers, who are consistently exposed to dangerous pesticides, are overwhelmingly Latinx. Nail salon workers, who are overwhelmingly women and a majority of whom are women of color, are exposed to products that contain a host of toxic chemicals that may cause reproductive harm and cancers. And women – especially Black women – are more likely to be exposed to toxic chemicals in personal care products.

The EPA is supposed to protect our families from chemicals that can harm our health. Mr. Dourson's record of seeking to weaken chemical safety standards, however, raises serious concerns about his ability to vigorously protect the public. We urge you to carefully consider the impacts of chemical safety on reproductive health as you make the critical decision of whether Mr. Dourson is fit to head the office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

Sincerely,

Black Women's Health Imperative

Center for Reproductive Rights

If/When/How

In Our Own Voice: National Black Women's Reproductive Justice Agenda

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

National Council of Jewish Women

National Health Law Program

National Institute for Reproductive Health

National LGBTQ Task Force Action Fund

National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Organization for Women

National Partnership for Women & Families

National Women's Health Network

National Women's Law Center

PAI

Physicians for Reproductive Health

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States

URGE: Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity