



**Testimony of Ansje Miller  
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**Public Oversight Hearing: Examining the City's Compliance with Environmentally Preferable Purchasing Laws**

**January 27, 2012**

Good afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about this great opportunity that the city has to reduce the public health threat of dioxin through its environmentally preferable purchasing laws.

In our lifetimes we have all watched the steady climb in rates of cancer, developmental disabilities, hormonal illnesses, infertility, autism, birth defects, asthma, obesity, diabetes, and a long list of other serious diseases.

Whose friends and family have not been touched by these illnesses? Why are the rates of devastating sicknesses skyrocketing?

The answer is becoming clear: Industrial chemicals surround us.

My name is Ansje Miller and I am the Eastern States Director for the Center for Environmental Health. For over 15 years, CEH has been working to protect people from those toxic chemicals and promotes business products and practices that are safe for public health and the environment.

Now New York City has the opportunity to protect people from one of the most toxic chemicals known to science: dioxin. Dioxin is among the 12 “dirty dozen” chemicals banned by the United Nations Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) treaty because they can cause “serious health effects including certain cancers, birth defects, dysfunctional immune and reproductive systems, greater susceptibility to disease and even diminished intelligence.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Clean Production Action. “Green Chemistry Makes Computing Safer for the Environment.” Web Page accessed January 26, 2012 [www.cleanproduction.org/library/CPA\\_Applegreenchem\\_Jan09.pdf](http://www.cleanproduction.org/library/CPA_Applegreenchem_Jan09.pdf)

Local Law 120 of 2005 required the Mayor's Office of Contract Services "to promulgate rules to reduce the city's purchase or lease of materials whose combustion may lead to the formation of dioxin or dioxin-like compounds." The deadline was four years ago, yet we still don't have a rule.

One example of how the City could move Local Law 120 forward is to avoid electronics made with PVC. Because of its high chlorine content, PVC is a major source of chlorinated dioxin. Since technology changes so quickly, electronics have a relatively short lifecycle, making end of life concerns more pressing. The plastic components of electronics are usually burned at the end of life to recover the precious metals inside, leading to the release of dioxins.

Recognizing the health threat that PVC poses, Kaiser Permanente, the largest managed care organization in the United States adopted a Specific Environmental Criteria for all Purchasing Decisions: and that is, to avoid products containing PVC.

Promulgating a rule to phase out PVC, including for electronics, would go a long way to reducing dioxin exposure in New York and around the planet and is relatively low hanging fruit. There are safer, readily available alternatives. CEH created a Shopping Guide for Finding Greener Electronics. It provides an overview of companies that are offering consumer electronics that are free of PVC as well as another highly toxic class of chemicals, Brominated Flame Retardants. This Guide and other tools for purchasing greener electronics can be found on our website, [www.ceh.org/electronics](http://www.ceh.org/electronics).

The Greener Electronics Guide was designed for consumers, but many of the same products are used in commercial settings as well. In fact, CEH has worked with major purchasers including large healthcare and financial institutions (including Kaiser and one of the nation's largest brokerage firms) in their efforts by providing them with tools and information to help identify greener electronics during their RFP and RFI process, including PVC-free products. We could do the same for NYC.

New York City took a bold step to protect public health with this green purchasing law, both for its residents and for its power to change the market. Now it's important for the City to close the deal in phasing out PVC and its contribution to one of the most toxic chemicals, dioxin. There are safer, affordable options readily available. CEH encourages and offers to support MOCS in swiftly promulgating a rule on dioxin that would include PVC-free purchasing to implement Local Law 120 of 2005.