

14 February 2012

Statement of Michael Belliveau, Executive Director
Environmental Health Strategy Center

in support of the Maine Campaign for BPA-Free Food
State House, Augusta, Maine

It's Time to Stop the Corporate Chemical Threat to Our Children's Health

Learning disabilities, prostate cancer, breast cancer. Exposure to bisphenol A (BPA) early in life can wreak hormone havoc on the healthy development of our children. We're here today because Maine families deserve answers and protective action on BPA.

Who put the BPA in our food supply? Who's behind the cover up of BPA in baby food in violation of Maine law? Who's using cartoon characters to market BPA-laden canned foods to our toddlers? And most importantly, what can we do to protect our families' health?

To help answer those questions, we did our homework. And then we sent food samples to the laboratory to test for BPA.

First, we discovered that two U.S. chemical companies produce BPA for use in making epoxy resins that are applied as a coating on the inside of food and beverage cans and metal lids for glass food jars. BPA leaks from the can and lid linings into our food and drink.

So you can thank **Dow Chemical** and **Momentive Specialty Chemicals** for putting BPA in our food supply. Together, these two chemical giants dominate the \$5 billion U.S. market for BPA-based epoxy resins. Everyone knows Dow Chemical, the same company that brought us napalm, Agent Orange and dioxin. Billionaire Leon Black at Apollo Global Management controls the lesser-known Momentive Specialty Chemicals.

Virtually every time we feed our babies from a baby food jar, we feed them a little bit of BPA made by Dow or Momentive. We sent a dozen glass jars of baby food to the laboratory last month. BPA was detected in eleven of the metal lids. You can measure BPA in the baby food itself at 1 to 3 parts per billion. You're not supposed to know that because ...

Second, we discovered a BPA cover up by two major manufacturers of well-known baby foods, **Beech-Nut** and **Wild Harvest**. Both companies failed to report their use of BPA in baby food jars by October 3, 2011 as required by Maine's Kid Safe Products Act. If you fail

to report BPA use, the law prohibits you from selling your product in the State of Maine. Yet both these companies continue to sell baby food with BPA in violation of Maine law.

We measured the highest levels of BPA in jar lids and baby food sold under the Wild Harvest brand manufactured by grocery giant **SUPERVALU**, which operates in Maine as Shaw's. Despite being a Fortune 500 company with 135,000 employees, SUPERVALU ignored Maine's deadline for reporting the use of BPA in their Wild Harvest baby food jars. SUPERVALU claims on its website that "All Wild Harvest products are free from preservatives and manufactured additives." They just don't want you to know about BPA.

The other BPA scofflaw is **Hero AG**, the Swiss company that makes Beech-Nut baby food. After Beech-Nut was contacted by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection for its failure to report BPA use in baby food jars, the company evaded its responsibility by claiming "that the baby foods which Beech-Nut currently manufactures have no intentionally added bisphenol A (BPA) in them." (letters of Nov. 23 and Dec. 14, 2011). Their response ignores a critical fact – that containers of Beech-Nut baby food DO contain BPA! Our lab tests show that all three of the Beech-Nut baby food lids tested contain BPA.

Third, we learned that **Campbell's Soup**, among other food giants, is intentionally marketing canned foods containing BPA to toddlers and preschoolers. Campbell's uses cartoon characters like Dora the Explorer and Disney Princess to market to this age group. Our lab tests revealed that Campbell's Dora the Explorer chicken soup contained 134 parts per billion of BPA. The company's Disney Princess SpaghettiOs tested at 26 parts per billion of BPA. Under the Kid Safe Products Act, the State has authority to regulate priority chemicals in the food packaging of products intended for children under 3 years of age. But no state action has been taken to require reporting or phase-out of BPA in this toddler food.

The good news is that BPA-free alternatives are already available or within reach. As of October 2011, all four infant formula makers have phased out BPA use in cans and containers. Gerber brand baby food manufactured after October 2011 by Nestlé Nutrition no longer contains BPA. Hain Celestial Group, the makers of Earth's Best baby food, has pledged to be BPA-free by October 2012. Some manufacturers of canned foods, such as Eden Foods and Muir Glen, have also transitioned to BPA-free can linings.

All foods should be BPA-free! The first step should be to enforce Maine law: Beech-Nut and Wild Harvest baby food jars containing BPA should be taken off Maine grocery shelves until those companies make binding commitments to phase out BPA. State agencies should ban use of BPA in baby food and toddler food under the authority of the Kid Safe Products Act. And the Maine Legislature should close the loophole that allows BPA to be used in canned foods for older children and adults. Everybody deserves a BPA-free food supply!