

March 7, 2013

The Honorable Kathleen Sebelius
United States Secretary of Health and Human Services
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20201
Kathleen.Sebelius@hhs.gov

Dear Madam Secretary:

We are writing as representatives of the unions and environmental organizations that partner in the BlueGreen Alliance to ask you to take action on both the occupational and environmental causes of breast cancer by creating a national breast cancer prevention strategy.

Last month the Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee sent you its report, "Breast Cancer and the Environment: Prioritizing Prevention," which concludes that preventing exposure to environmental risk factors is the most promising path to decrease incidence of the disease and is the "key to reducing the burden" on individuals, families and society.

The Interagency Report comes only three months after the publication of a six-year study¹ that found that women employed in the automotive plastics and food-packaging industries in Ontario were five times as likely to develop breast cancer prior to menopause, as women in the control group. An accompanying analysis² shows that these women's work environments are heavily contaminated with dust and fumes that contain vinyl chloride, acrylonitrile, styrene and other mammary carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals including BPA, phthalates and brominated flame retardants. Just last week, JAMA published a new paper³ that showed that in the United States the incidence of advanced breast cancer is increasing in women under 40 years of age. These studies affirm the findings of the Prioritizing Prevention report and demonstrate the need for broadening the

¹ Brophy, J., "[Breast cancer risk in relation to occupations with exposure to carcinogens and endocrine disruptors: a Canadian case-control study](#)," Environmental Health Journal. (November 19, 2012).

² DeMatteo, R., et al. "[Chemical Exposures of Women Workers in the Plastics Industry with Particular Reference to Breast Cancer and Reproductive Hazards](#)." NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy. (Volume 22, Number 4 / 2012).

³ Johnson, R., Chien, F. and Bleyer, A., "[Incidence of Breast Cancer With Distant Involvement Among Women in the United States, 1976 to 2009](#)." The Journal of the American Medical Association. (February 27, 2013).

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focus of breast cancer research from its present emphasis on diagnosis and treatment to include the causes of this disease epidemic including chemical exposures, radiation, night shift work, artificial light and other occupational and environmental factors.

We urge you to act quickly to implement the recommendations in the report by creating an action plan that lays the groundwork for a national prevention strategy. We stand ready to partner with you in the design and implementation of the action plan.

Respectfully,

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