

AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

June 16, 2020

Dear Senator:

The AFL-CIO strongly opposes the nomination of Nancy Beck to chair the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) for the next seven years. This independent federal agency is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risk of injury or death associated with the use of thousands of consumer products, many of which are used every day by working people on the job.

Ms. Beck is best known for a long career opposing worker and public health protections from dangerous chemicals—both as a senior executive with the chemical industry trade association that represents Dow, DuPont, Monsanto, Exxon, and Chemours and in several capacities as a Trump Administration senior government official.

In her current role at the Office of Management and Budget, she was instrumental in weakening the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines on how to safely reopen workplaces that have closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic—notably ignoring agency experts and placing profits over the health of our nation's workers and the general public.

The Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), as amended in 2016, increases the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect workers from toxic substances that result in debilitating and deadly chronic diseases. Since the 1970's, the AFL-CIO has been instrumental in the development and implementation of TSCA, as well as in securing bipartisan support for the 2016 amending of the statute. Shortly after she arrived at the EPA, however, Ms. Beck began limiting the scope of chemicals' risk evaluations, thereby enabling EPA policy decisions that endanger the lives of workers and their families, children and other vulnerable groups.

Ms. Beck blocked a proposed ban on the use of methylene chloride, the solvent in paint strippers that is well-known to pose a lethal risk to workers and consumers. She willfully ignored exposures to "legacy" asbestos, the poster child for the failure of the original TSCA which has made workers, their families and communities sick for decades. She further pressured EPA scientists when evaluating the potential harms of trichloroethylene (TCE), a cancer-causing solvent linked to cardiac defects from in-utero exposure, to ignore the cardiac effects and underestimate worker exposures. Distorting the authorities and responsibilities between EPA and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in regulating workplace chemical exposures, she blocked, weakened and delayed worker protections from many other toxic chemicals including lead, dioxane, chlorpyrifos, and the "forever" group of PFAS chemicals.

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Moreover, experts repeatedly have found Beck's scientific work to be deficient. A Trump Administration peer review panel found that chemical evaluations produced under her oversight "strayed from basic risk assessment principles," resulting in draft evaluations that were "unscientific," "misleading," riddled with "mistakes and inconsistencies," and "generally lacking in [their] ability to present a coherent picture of" worker risks.

Rarely is a record so crystal clear. At every turn in her career, whether as a chemical trade association executive or a public servant, Ms. Beck has allowed the chemical industry to dictate her decisions and actions—regardless of the impact. If ever there was a case of the fox being asked to guard the hen-house, this is it. There is no question that Nancy Beck at the helm of the CPSC will have devastating consequences for our nation's workers and the public overall.

We strongly urge you to oppose this nomination.

Sincerely,



William Samuel
Director, Government Affairs

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