Testimony in Support of SB 364 and AB 544 on Lead Wheel Weights
Senate Committee on Environment
March 23, 2010

Mr. Chairman and members, Committee on Environment, thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on SB 364 and AB 544, dealing with lead wheel weights. My name is John Reindl. I am from Madison and am a retired county recycling manager. I am speaking for only myself.

This issue first came to my attention about 6 years ago, when I was still working. After hearing about this issue, I read an article from the journal, *Environmental Health Perspectives*, of some research done in Albuquerque on the frequency of lead wheel weights falling off vehicles on city streets, where they then got ground up by traffic and contributed lead to the air, soil and water, often in less than a week.

Automobile and light truck wheel weights vary in size and weight, ranging between 0.2-6 inches in length 0.25-4 ounces in weight. A typical vehicle has 10 weights on its wheels, with a total of between 7 and 9 ounces of lead in wheel weights.

In 2005, our County Executive sent a letter of support for a petition to EPA for action on this issue, noting the County's valuable water resources and estimates that 1.2 million lead wheel weights fall off vehicles in urban areas of Wisconsin each year, contributing 26 tons of lead to the environment. Later, we read that 'Studies conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in Madison, Wisconsin, have shown that approximately 40% of the runoff from residential areas and 70% of the runoff from commercial areas had lead levels "high enough to kill aquatic life."

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) estimates that most weights are lost on city streets when vehicles hit curbs, bounce over potholes, stop or accelerate suddenly, or turn sharply. And my own limited research found that this is true here in Madison, as a quick search of a street found a fallen lead wheel weight.

EPA decided not to move forward at that time, but last year, formed the National Lead Free Wheel Weights Imitative, with a goal to eliminate their sale and installation by the end of 2011. (http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/wastemin/nlfwwi.htm). Charter members include almost all major vehicle manufacturers in the US, as well as the wheel weight manufacturers.

Automobile manufacturers

American Honda Motor Company
American Suzuki Motor Corporation
Association of International Automobile Manufacturers (AIAM)
Aston Martin Lagonda of North America
Chrysler, LLC
Ferrari North America
Ford Motor Company
General Motors Corporation
Hyundai Motor America
Isuzu Motors America
Kia Motors America
Maserati North America
Mitsubishi Motors of North America, Inc.
Nissan North America
Subaru of America
Toyota Motor North America

Weight Manufacturer

3M
Hennessy Industries, Inc – BADA Division
Perfect Equipment, Inc.
Plombco Wheel

Additionally, at least 4 states (California, Maine, Vermont and Washington) have already banned the use of lead wheel weights and similar legislation is under consideration in several other states (Iowa, Maryland, New York). They have been banned by the European Union on new vehicles and on after-market wheels beginning in 2005.

Cost-effective alternatives to lead wheel weights already exist and, as part of their testimony for the Maine legislation, the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, had just two requests – that the ban go into effect at the end of 2011, the same as the goal of EPA for a national halt to their sale and that the legislation also ban the use of intentionally-added mercury in wheel weights.

In closing, the health and environmental impacts of lead are well known and many uses of lead have already been prohibited -- tin can solder, paint, inks, as additives in gasoline, their use in plumbing fixtures and drinking water systems, and others.

I join with the automotive industry, EPA and the sponsors of these bills to add wheel weights to this list. I would also like to see mercury wheel weights similarly banned, as has been done by several states, but perhaps it is best to develop separate legislation on that topic.

Testimony on LD 986,
"An Act to Protect the Public Health and the Environment
By Prohibiting the Sale of Wheel Weights
Containing Lead or Mercury"
April 3, 2009

Senator Goodall, Representative Duchesne, Members of the Natural Resources Committee, I am Pattie Aho, an attorney with Pierce Atwood, LLP speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers. The Alliance is an association of eleven vehicle manufacturers whose members represent over 70% of all car and light truck sales in the United States.

Although most automakers have phased out the use of lead wheel weights, a U.S. EPA voluntary commitment on wheel weights asked automakers to commit to cease using lead wheel weights by December 31, 2011. To be consistent with this commitment, the Alliance would request the implementation date be changed to January 1, 2012. We would request this change be made on line four of the proposed language contained in LD 986.

Wheel weights do not contain mercury. As drafted though, this legislation may be interpreted to apply to products other than wheel weights or other balancing products. We would request that the language more clearly specify that it applies only to wheel weights and wheel balancing products.

Here is a proposed amendment to the language contained in LD 986:

> Beginning January 1, 2012, a person may not sell or offer to sell or distribute weights or other products for balancing motor vehicle wheels if the weight or balancing product contains lead or mercury that was intentionally added during the manufacture of the product.

We believe that our amendment is in keeping with the spirit of the EPA voluntary commitment, and provides clarity regarding its applicability to wheel weights or other balancing products.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with the amendment offered by the Alliance, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully submitted,
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