October 17, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
Committee on Environment and Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Carper, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper,

As scientists who have devoted our careers to better understanding the impact the environment has upon our health, we urge you to reject the nomination of Dr. Michael Dourson to lead the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Research continues to illuminate critical relationships between certain environmental exposures and a wide array of health effects including cancer, infertility, and behavioral disorders. It is essential that our governmental institutions use current and best available science to evaluate chemical risks, and act promptly to protect human health and the environment where those risks exist. Granting Dr. Dourson the responsibility of overseeing EPA OCSPP would threaten the agency’s ability to credibly and effectively address harmful chemical exposures.

Dr. Dourson has built a career of abusing science to mischaracterize real-world chemical risks and in doing so has jeopardized public health, including the health of those most vulnerable among us like pregnant women and children. His numerous publications on chemicals from 1,4-dioxane to perchlorate to chlorpyrifos, demonstrate his tendency to contort, distort, or dismiss scientific evidence that lead to assertions that chemicals are safe at levels orders of magnitude higher than have been deemed safe by authoritative bodies.

Dr. Dourson’s “educational” campaigns through activities like the “Kids+Chemicals Safety” website, supported with funding from the American Chemistry Council, also raise serious concerns. The website, since pulled down, sought to play down concerns linking chemicals to health concerns such as asthma, noting “most studies cannot link one individual chemical or product to the increase in wheezing or asthma-like symptoms.” Or using hackneyed industry spin such as “All chemicals are toxic at some level.” As members of the scientific community, we take seriously our responsibility to communicate responsibly to the broader public about our work and its implications. The Kids+Chemicals website disturbingly owes more to industry spin than to good science.

To grant Dourson the imprimatur of EPA, would both undermine the credibility of the chemicals programs and raise significant concerns about whether EPA can be trusted to ensure the safety of
commonly used chemicals—chemicals in our food, home, and places of work. We hope your committee will ask tough questions the upcoming hearing and ultimately, reject Michael Dourson’s nomination.

Sincerely,

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