

PRINTING Industries of WASHINGTON

December 20, 2024

State of Washington, Department of Ecology
Attn: Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction Program
PO Box 47600
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Safer Products for Washington, Priority Consumer Products

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Printing Industries of Washington (“WAPrint”), which represents hundreds of small printing, publishing, and packaging companies across the State, I am writing you today to share our deepest concerns over the target list included in the Safer Products for Washington Cycle 2 Draft Priority Products Report (“Draft Report”). The printing industry in the State of Washington is proud to employ more than 14,000 team members state-wide and happily contributes hundreds of millions of dollars to the state economy. Besides our concerns with targeting products that are crucial to our industry’s livelihood and the lack of available alternatives, we believe that the Department of Ecology (“Ecology”) is circumventing federal preemption and overplaying its regulatory role.

WAPrint and our members care deeply for our environment and are proud of the steps the industry has taken to reduce our footprint on the planet. From improving our energy efficiencies and reducing extra waste to the high rate at which our facilities recycle, we are working to do our part. With this being said, WAPrint disagrees with Ecology as to their ability to proceed with including certain pigments used in printing ink in their Safer Products for Washington process that have been officially excluded under federal preemption. We respectfully ask you to reconsider your authority.

In addition to the federal preemption concerns, WAPrint is concerned about the focus on inadvertent PCB’s (“iPCBs”) as we do not believe Ecology has invested the proper time or given the appropriate level of consideration required to understand the complexity of inks, printing technologies and the way ink is applied to a substrate to produce a product. PCBs are not used in the manufacturing process of any pigment. Rather their presence is the result of a chemical reaction that occurs during the manufacturing process which makes them an inadvertent byproduct and not intentional.

While our industry may not be at the top of everyone’s mind, print influences almost every aspect of everyday life. It is an essential component of just about every product produced and used in our lifetime. From toothpaste to printed medical information, the printing industry has touched it. We utilize inks to do it. WAPrint respectfully asks Ecology to reconsider including inks in the next phase of Safer Products and work together with the industry to conduct a robust, inclusive, and scientific study on these products.

In addition to our points above, please consider some of our other concerns regarding Ecology’s identifying of printing inks and iPCBs:


- When printing inks were identified for the Safer Products program in 2020, Ecology concluded that “colored pigments contained in inks are the largest source of inadvertent PCB contamination in consumer goods”. However, to the best of your knowledge and research, this conclusion was not supported by any specific references, studies, or other supporting documentation. It appears that Ecology did not follow any recognized scientific protocols that examined the multitude of products and other sources that contain iPCBs, evaluated potential releases from these sources, or performed a ranking based on a true risk assessment.

Furthermore, Ecology did not test any inks for the presence of iPCBs until late 2021 and even then, Ecology only tested a limited number of inks that are not representative of the wide range of inks used in printing applications.

- We are concerned about the lack of information and data supporting Ecology's claims that there are acceptable alternatives. There are many factors involved with determining an acceptable alternative pigment that include its physical characteristics, performance characteristics, optical qualities, and ability to be used in all current printing technologies. It is concerning that industry experts have been left out of this discussion. It cannot be assumed that because a given pigment is in a certain color class, such as yellow, any yellow pigment can be universally used as an alternative. Inks are not universally interchangeable. It has taken many decades of experience, testing, and evaluation to settle on the proper combinations of pigments in the appropriate ink system. A single attribute such as visual appearance cannot be the sole basis for a conclusion. Proper evaluation requires extensive testing and measurement of critical parameters during the manufacturing process and use of the finished product.
- Not all chlorinated pigments contain iPCBs. Ecology has not identified which specific pigments contain iPCBs and regulating all pigments that contain chlorine is neither scientifically valid nor economically feasible. About 150 of the common pigments used contain chlorine and not all of them contain iPCBs.

The Printing Industries of Washington appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Safer Products for Washington Cycle 2 Draft Priority Products Report and respectfully asks the State of Washington's Department of Ecology to reconsider its inclusion of inks.

Sincerely,



Louis J. Caron, CPA (Inactive)
President