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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce “Prioritizing Chemicals for Safety Determination” Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade, and Consumer Protection November 17, 2009

I commend Chairman Rush for holding this hearing. Today, we begin to delve into the details of how best to reform the Toxics Substances Control Act (TSCA), the nation’s primary law for ensuring the safety of industrial chemicals.

At the first hearing on this subject earlier this year, the Committee learned of the widespread agreement among industry, labor, and nongovernmental organizations that the Toxic Substances Control Act needs to be reformed. Unlike the Clean Air Act, the Safe Drinking Water Act, or so many other laws within our Committee’s jurisdiction, TSCA has never been modernized to fix the flaws we know it has.

Since our first hearing, major developments have begun to narrow and shape the debate. On September 29, 2009, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson announced the Administration’s principles for TSCA reform. These common sense principles call for TSCA to be reauthorized in a way that reflects our best scientific understanding to protect public health and the environment.

Similarly, the American Chemistry Council, the Consumer Specialty Products Association, the Grocery Manufacturers Association, and the Soap and Detergent Association have released principles for reform.

A new coalition of environmental, consumer, health, and faith groups called “The Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families” coalition has announced their platform for reform as well.

And the dialogue we are having here is also happening outside the halls of Congress. For instance, the Environmental Working Group joined with the American Chemistry Council and others in hosting a conference last month on the future of U.S. chemicals policy. These dialogues are important as we move towards legislation.

There are thousands of industrial chemicals currently in commerce that have not been adequately reviewed for safety. Today's hearing focuses on the key question: where do we begin? How do we prioritize chemicals for a safety determination?

I thank all of the witnesses for being here today and look forward to hearing their testimony on this important issue.

Thank you.