



Todd Wanek, President and CEO
Ashley Furniture Industries, Inc.
1 Ashley Way
Arcadia, WI 54612

November 26, 2014

Re: Your Customers Want Safer Products Free From Toxic Flame Retardants

Dear Mr. Wanek,

As the largest manufacturer and retailer of furniture in the United States, you are an industry leader. With great power in the market place comes great responsibility. We appreciate the efforts Ashley Furniture has already taken to reduce its environmental impact and improve sustainability across your supply chain, for example by reducing the use of hazardous chemical solvents and replacing them with water-based solvents. **In light of the recent changes to California's TB 117 flammability standards, we are writing to encourage you to take additional steps to improve your company's sustainability program, by eliminating toxic flame retardants from the furniture and other products that you sell.**

We are members of *Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families*, a broad-based national coalition working to protect human health and the environment from dangerous chemicals in everyday consumer products.

Toxic flame retardants can be found in couches and sofas across the country. These chemicals have been linked to real and measurable health impacts. Studies show women with higher levels of flame retardants in their blood can take longer to get pregnant and have smaller babies. Studies also show that children exposed in the womb can have lower IQs and attention problems. Other studies have linked flame retardants to cancer, male infertility, male birth defects, and early puberty in girls. Recent studies have even linked toxic flame retardants to autism and obesity.

Because of the widespread use of flame retardant chemicals, Americans carry much higher levels of these chemicals in their bodies than anyone else in the world. They migrate out of couches, get into the dust inside our homes and make their way into our bodies, even children and pregnant women. Experts say these chemicals are also ineffective in preventing furniture fires and are linked to serious health effects. In fact, the chemicals can make fires even more toxic by forming deadly gases and soot -- which pose avoidable dangers to firefighters.

Recent changes to California's flammability standards now provide better safety without the use of these toxic chemicals. The new standard, which this year is voluntary but will become mandatory January 1, 2015, can be met without the addition of flame retardant chemicals. It does not prevent the use of toxic flame retardants, however, so they may still be used in furniture foam; this makes it critical for retailers like Ashley Furniture to work with suppliers to eliminate their use in foam and textiles.

Other leading retailers are already bringing to market furniture without toxic flame retardants. Recently, the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) surveyed 16 major furniture stores about whether they would be offering furniture that meets the new California standard (TB117-2013) but without added flame retardant chemicals. Nine companies responded. Of those, three major chains, Crate & Barrel, the Futon Shop, and La-Z-Boy, have flame retardant-free furniture now available for

purchase. Three companies will offer flame retardant furniture by January 1, 2015: Williams-Sonoma (Pottery Barn, Pottery Barn Kids, West Elm), Ikea, and Interline (Scandinavian Designs, Plummers, Dania). Two additional chains, Ethan Allen and Walmart, indicated plans to carry flame retardant-free products in the future but have not established a timeline.

We ask that Ashley Furniture now take steps to identify, disclose, phase out and eliminate hazardous flame retardants from the furniture and other products you sell.

While flame retardants have rightfully been receiving a lot of public scrutiny in recent years, they are not the only chemicals of concern being used in consumer products. We have also enclosed a list of the **Hazardous 100+** chemicals of high concern, which includes flame retardants and additional chemicals commonly found in products. Most of these chemicals have been formally identified as hazardous by at least two authoritative governmental bodies based on strong credible scientific evidence. We have added a small group of additional chemicals that may pose similar hazards based on the published scientific literature or the finding of an authoritative government body. We have enclosed our *Hazardous 100+ Action Guide* that describes many resources available to assist you in addressing chemicals of concern in products.

You have the ability – and responsibility – to work with your suppliers to replace hazardous chemicals, beginning with toxic flame retardants, with truly safer alternatives. Doing so will not only please your customers and enhance your company’s reputation and sustainability profile, it will help you reduce the various financial, legal, and regulatory liabilities that may be associated with carrying toxic flame retardants and other hazardous chemicals in products sold by Ashley Furniture and sold in Ashley Furniture HomeStores. For example in recent years, numerous states have introduced legislation that would ban toxic flame retardants in furniture, and US Senator Charles Schumer has introduced federal legislation that would ban flame retardants in furniture. The state of California just recently enacted legislation requiring labeling of furniture with added flame retardants.

We would appreciate receiving your written response to our request by January 15, 2014. We would also be pleased to discuss with you our mutual interest in providing safe, quality products for your customers. If you would like to discuss options and approaches, please contact Mike Schade, Mind the Store Campaign Director of Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families at (646) 783-3477 or mikeschade@saferchemicals.org

Thank you for your serious consideration of this leadership commitment.

Sincerely,



Andy Igrejas, Director
Mike Schade, Mind the Store Campaign Director
Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families
641 S St. NW, 3rd floor
Washington, DC 20001
www.saferchemicals.org

Enclosures: Hazardous 100+ Chemicals of High Concern and Hazardous 100+ Action Guide