JANUARY 2020 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

STATE POLICY CAMPAIGN & STORYTELLING WORKSHOP

CAN YOU TELL A GOOD STORY?
DO YOU UNDERSTAND HOW POWERFUL STORYTELLING CAN BE IN AN ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN?

WE ACT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
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OUR MISSION

Since 1988, WE ACT for Environmental Justice has built healthy communities by ensuring that low income and people of color participate meaningfully in the creation of sound and fair environmental health and protection policies and practices.
January 11, 2020 10:00 am - 1:00 pm
Church of the Crucifixion, Convent Ave & West 149th Street
WE ACT MEMBERSHIP MEETING

10:00 COMMUNITY BUILDING & BREAKFAST

10:15 WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS
    Marquis Jenkins, WE ACT Director of Membership & Organizing
    Juan Goris, WE ACT Chair of Membership Planning Committee

10:25 2019 REVIEW
    Cecil Corbin-Mark, WE ACT Deputy Director & Director of Policy Initiatives

10:30 STATE POLICY OVERVIEW
    Marquis Jenkins, WE ACT Director of Membership & Organizing

10:40 SCREENING OF LORAX

10:55 UNDERSTANDING THE ANATOMY OF A STORY
    Taylor Morton, WE ACT Environmental Health and Education Manager

11:15 ROTATING WORKSHOPS
    • Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs Act
    • Mercury in Skin lighting products
    • Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safety Housing Act(S5107/A3432)

11:50 STORYTELLING WORKSHOP
    Taylor Morton, Environmental Health and Education Manager

12:50 ANNOUNCEMENTS

1:00 CLOSING
1. Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs Act
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:
People of color and low-income New Yorkers pay more of their income for energy, and live in disproportionately inefficient, unaffordable, and unhealthy homes. Energy use in the home is a key contributor to climate change and environmental health challenges. Energy efficiency jobs represent a fast-growing industry statewide, but training for those jobs isn’t readily available in our communities.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT is working with statewide grassroots groups and policy experts to introduce and pass an Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs bill. This bill will:
- Require that energy efficiency retrofit money is deployed where it is needed most - in communities of color and low income statewide;
- Fix utility benefit-cost analysis so that people's health and well-being are at the center of decision making for targeting building retrofits;
- Empower the state to make building repairs that enable efficiency measures;
- Require the state to allocate worker training funds for energy efficiency in communities of color and low income statewide; and
- Require the state energy agency to track actual benefits of energy efficiency retrofit work.

2. Mercury in Skin Lightening Products
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:
Mercury is a dangerous, persistent neurotoxin. It can cause skin irritation, as well as dizziness, cognitive, and psychological damage. Mercury is used under various different names as a preservative in creams designed to lighten skin color. These products are primarily used by black and brown people.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT is working with Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa to introduce and pass a bill that would ban mercury from all skin lightening products sold in New York State.
3. State Energy Spending Study Bill  
POLICY TYPE: Legislation  
STATUS: Proposal  

PROBLEM:  
New Yorkers who pay energy bills contribute to the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) total budget via the Systems Benefit Charge, which is assessed on energy bills. NYSERDA is also funded from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, a regional carbon cap-and-trade initiative that allocates periodic carbon auction proceeds to participating states. Currently, there is no publicly available information on state energy program spending that is tracked by geographic location.  

SOLUTION:  
WE ACT will propose a bill to track the final geographic destination of all RGGI proceeds and all NYSERDA energy program spending by Zip Code. This would ensure that funds intended to be spent on low-income communities actually go where they are most needed.

4. Fixed Energy Bill Charges Legislation (S6241/A8118)  
POLICY TYPE: Legislation  
STATUS: Bill  

PROBLEM:  
Utility bills include fixed charges that ensure that the utility makes money from customers even when they aren’t using energy. Having a fixed charge hurts low income people the most, because they tend to use less energy and pay a higher percent of their income on the fixed charge.  

SOLUTION:  
This bill would ensure that utilities can only include specific kinds of costs when determining the fixed charge for their customers, and should lead to a significant reduction in fixed charges across the state. The bill will reduce energy bills for the average low-income customer and incentivize energy efficiency by reducing the fixed portion of residential customers' electricity bills.
5. Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act (S5107/A3432)

POLICY TYPE: Legislation  
STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:
Lead poisoning of children remains a prevalent and preventable environmental diseases in New York, despite lead-based paint being outlawed in the mid-twentieth century. The danger of exposure is greatest for people of color and low income who live disproportionately in older homes with older infrastructure. Elevated blood lead levels result in impairment of the ability to think, concentrate, and learn. Enforcement of existing state law is not protecting people from lead poisoning.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT will work with our statewide partners to pass the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act. The bill would make enforcement of lead hazard control standards in the state of New York more certain and more effective; create a loan fund to assist owners in complying with lead-safe requirements; provides for inspections and certification of inspectors and remediators; requires registration of affected properties; provides tax credits for remediation; provides for appointment of deputy commissioner of housing and community renewal to oversee provisions; provides for educational programs relating to lead poisoning and abatement.

6. LIHEAP Reform Advocacy

POLICY TYPE: Budget proposal  
STATUS: in development

PROBLEM:
Currently, federal dollars are allocated to New York State’s annual budget for heating and cooling subsidies. Funds administered disproportionately support heating needs, particularly in Upstate NY. LIHEAP cooling relief funding (as it currently stands) helps families purchase an A/C but is not flexible enough to assist with the operating costs low-income families must endure to power their A/C in warmer months.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT will develop a budget proposal for a fund to supplement existing LIHEAP funds for air conditioning electrical costs.
7. Electric Interconnection Rules and Metering Model Regulations

POLICY TYPE: Regulation
STATUS: Proposal in Development

PROBLEM:
With few exceptions, private utilities control the physical electric infrastructure that New Yorkers rely on for electrical service. As climate change worsens, and extreme weather increasingly stress and degrade the electrical grid, new solutions are necessary to ensure a reliable supply of energy. Effective and reproducible microgrids require changes to the utility regulations that empower communities to build energy infrastructure in support of resiliency.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT, along with partner Rocky Mountain Institute, will develop policy recommendations for solar plus storage, building interconnecting and multi-building electrical and steam connection that are based in WE ACT’s ongoing community research that allow for increased uptake of solar, storage, and interconnection.

8. Amendment to Reduce PFAS Chemicals in Food Packaging (S.2000/A.4739)

POLICY TYPE: Bill
STATUS: In Committee (Environmental Conservation)

PROBLEM:
Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, or PFAS, refers to a group of inorganic chemicals found in many everyday products that have been linked to reproductive and developmental effects, liver and kidney disruption, immunological disruption, low infant birth weights, increased cholesterol, and cancer. Therefore environmental justice communities are at the greatest risk of PFAS exposure via inexpensive food packaging and products.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT endorses the Amendment to Reduce PFAS Chemicals in Food Packaging. This bill would prohibit the manufacture, sale, and distribution of food packaging in which PFAS chemicals are present in any amount and will hold manufacturers accountable through compliance recertifications for any formula change. This bill, if passed, will help protect our communities from needless exposure to dangerous PFAS chemicals.
9. Amendment to Prohibit The Manufacture, Distribution and Sale of Toys and Child Care Products Containing Phthalates

POLICY TYPE: Bill
STATUS: In Assembly Committee

PROBLEM:
Phthalates are a class of chemicals used to improve flexibility and durability of products and in cosmetics to bind fragrance to the product. Data has shown that exposure to phthalates is significantly higher in children age 6-11 and in people of color and that oral consumption is major route of exposure. Phthalates are linked to hormone disruption and developmental disorders. It is unjust that environmental justice communities, especially particularly sensitive populations such as children, continue to be exposed to toxic phthalates despite their known health concerns.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT endorses this amendment which will prohibit the manufacture, distribution, and sale of certain toys and child care products containing phthalates.
1. Energy Efficiency Equity and Jobs Act
POLICY TYPE: Legislation
STATUS: Proposal

PROBLEM:
People of color and low-income New Yorkers pay more of their income for energy, and live in disproportionately inefficient, unaffordable, and unhealthy homes. Energy use in the home is a key contributor to climate change and environmental health challenges. Energy efficiency jobs represent a fast-growing industry statewide, but training for those jobs isn’t readily available in our communities.

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SOLUTION:
WE ACT is working with Assemblymember Carmen De La Rosa to introduce and pass a bill that would ban mercury from all skin lightening products sold in New York State.
3. Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act (S5107/A3432)

POLICY TYPE: Legislation
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PROBLEM:
Lead poisoning of children remains a prevalent and preventable environmental diseases in New York, despite lead-based paint being outlawed in the mid-twentieth century. The danger of exposure is greatest for people of color and low income who live disproportionately in older homes with older infrastructure. Elevated blood lead levels result in impairment of the ability to think, concentrate, and learn. Enforcement of existing state law is not protecting people from lead poisoning.

SOLUTION:
WE ACT will work with our statewide partners to pass the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act. The bill would make enforcement of lead hazard control standards in the state of New York more certain and more effective; create a loan fund to assist owners in complying with lead-safe requirements; provides for inspections and certification of inspectors and remediators; requires registration of affected properties; provides tax credits for remediation; provides for appointment of deputy commissioner of housing and community renewal to oversee provisions; provides for educational programs relating to lead poisoning and abatement.
| Subject: What is your story about? (This can be a topic, or an issue) | Goal: What do you want your listener to know or learn from your story? | Audience: Who is your audience? What are their needs? |
| Set the Scene: What do you need to introduce? What should be set up or explained? | Make your point: What is the main thing you want your audience to know? | Wrap it up! What is your conclusion, and your call to action? |
WHAT ARE PHTHALATES?
(Pronounced: THAL-ates)

**QUICK FACTS**

- Phthalates are toxic chemicals used to soften plastics, and are in fragrances, inks and glues.
- Phthalates exposure is linked to ADHD, infertility, and asthma among other illnesses and health problems.
- Phthalates are widely used chemicals throughout the US food system and can enter into food at any point of food processing, packaging, and/or preparation.

**PHTHALATES CAN BE FOUND IN...**

- Plastic Toys
- Teething Rings
- Building Materials
- Plastic Gloves
- Cleaning Products
- Nail Polish
- Food Packaging
- Shampoo/Lotions

It is **UNJUST** that Environmental Justice (EJ) communities - low-income communities and/or communities of color - continue to be exposed to higher levels of toxic phthalates despite strong science showing their health risks. Vulnerable populations within these communities, such as pregnant women and children are especially at risk.

- US government data has shown that exposure to phthalates is significantly higher in children ages 6-11 and in people of color.
- Dollar store products, which are marketed towards environmental justice communities, have been found to contain phthalates at alarmingly high levels.
- EJ communities that experience food insecurity have less access to fresh and nutritious foods, and therefore rely more on processed and packaged foods that have higher levels of phthalates.
- Research shows that eating away from home results in higher phthalates exposure than home cooking especially for African-American men.

**GET INTO FOOD FROM PACKAGING & HANDLING**

- More phthalates are found in the processed and packaged foods, and fatty foods like mac & cheese
- Phthalates migrate into food from materials used in food packaging and processing.

**EXPOSURE**

- Even at low doses phthalates exposure can negatively impact child development, respiratory health, and reproductive health in men and women.

Phthalates are used in:
- Plastics
- Sealants
- Inks
- Fragrances
- Adhesives
- Coatings
- Rubber

**WE ACT** is active in the Coalition for Safer Food Processing and Packaging, aka the “Food Fight!” campaign. We collaborate with the coalition to persuade process food manufacturers to investigate and eliminate the sources of phthalates in their food products.
WHAT IS PRODUCT TOXICITY?

Beware of "Greenwashing." Products labeled "safe," "non-toxic" and "green" can contain hazardous ingredients. There should be a law against bogus claims, but there isn't. Some companies are willing to bend the truth to make profit off of consumers—because they can!

The Dirty Dozen-
AKA ingredients you should try and avoid:

- BHA & BHT
- Coal tar dyes
- DEA-related ingredients
- Dibutyl phthalate
- Formaldehyde
- Parabens
- Parfum
- PEG compounds
- Petrolatum
- Siloxanes
- Sodium Laureth Sulfate 3
- Triclosaning

Product toxicity is the degree to which a chemical substance or mixture of substances in personal care products damage an individual's health, often depending on dose.

Why Should I Care About Product Toxicity?

- Harmful chemical substances that have not been tested for consumer safety are often used in the creation of everyday personal care products like lotions, shampoos, soaps, and deodorants.
- Childhood exposure to these and other baby specific products such as baby wipes and powders are particularly concerning because this is when your body is still developing.
- Toxic chemicals are especially prevalent in cosmetics marketed towards women of color such as skin bleaching creams, and hair relaxers, straighteners and oils.
- Some of the health effects of exposure to dangerous chemicals include hormone disruption, early onset puberty, organ damage, mercury and lead poisoning and even cancer.

See if the products you use are safe and find safer alternatives using these phone apps!

Routes of Exposure-
How chemicals enter the body

What is WE ACT Doing About This Issue?

- WE ACT is working with Columbia’s Center for Environmental Health in Northern Manhattan and the Center for Children’s Environmental Health to raise awareness about the hazards of unregulated chemicals in personal care products.
- In January 2019, WE ACT and Columbia hosted a community briefing in Central Harlem on the topic of cosmetics and personal care products, their health effects on women and children, and what consumers can do to protect their health.

WE ACT for Environmental Justice | 1854 Amsterdam Avenue, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10031 | weact.org | 212-961-1000
Black consumers purchase 9 times more ethnic beauty products than other groups. Latino/a/x are the fastest growing ethnic group in the beauty market. Asian Americans spend 70% more than the national average on skin care products.

Skin lightening
Skin bleaching
Skin brightening

Skin whitening is an issue ingrained in the legacy of racism, colonialism and colorism. Colorism is the prejudice and discrimination against people of darker skin tone, favoring people of lighter skin tones. It is a product of racism worldwide in which white skin is deemed beautiful while darker skin is deemed less favorable. This eurocentric standard of beauty has penetrated all racial groups, benefiting lighter skinned individuals and encouraging skin whitening which poses long term health problems.

Common skin whitening chemicals
- Mercury
- Hydroquinone
- Corticosteroids

Dangers of these chemicals
- Kidney Damage
- Impaired Wound Healing
- Skin Thinning

Value your Melanin!
- Center dark skin positive media eg. black children’s books and darker skinned dolls
- Melanin is a natural protectant from the Sun’s UV rays and can prevent signs of aging

The Facts
- Black consumers purchase 9 times more ethnic beauty products than other groups.
- Latino/a/x are the fastest growing ethnic group in the beauty market.
- Asian Americans spend 70% more than the national average on skin care products.

Origin of Skin Whitening
- Skin whitening is an issue ingrained in the legacy of racism, colonialism and colorism.
- Colorism is the prejudice and discrimination against people of darker skin tone, favoring people of lighter skin tones. It is a product of racism worldwide in which white skin is deemed beautiful while darker skin is deemed less favorable.
- This eurocentric standard of beauty has penetrated all racial groups, benefiting lighter skinned individuals and encouraging skin whitening which poses long term health problems.

Community Impact
- The sale and use of skin whitening products in marginalized communities further exacerbates health disparities.
- These products cause disproportionate harm to women of color and EJ communities and must be banned!

WE ACT is working with our allies in congress to introduce and pass a bill that bans mercury in skin lightening products sold in the United States.
WHY SHOULD I BE CONCERNED ABOUT LEAD?
Lead is a toxic substance that is harmful to your body, and it is especially harmful to children under six - including fetuses.

There are primarily two ways in which lead can get into our bodies. The first is inhalation, breathing in lead "dust" that's created when lead paint peels or is disturbed through construction. The second is through ingestion, whether placing lead paint "chips" or toys containing lead into the mouth or drinking water contaminated with lead.

Exposure to lead can cause brain damage and result in learning difficulties and behavioral problems with lasting impacts. Long-term exposure to lead can cause permanent damage to the body and even death.

WHAT ARE THE SOURCES OF EXPOSURE?
Some of the more common sources of lead exposure are:

- Peeling and chipping lead paint, typically from houses built before 1978
- Water flowing through old pipes
- Children's toys that contain lead or lead paint
- Artificial turf fields
- Jewelry containing lead
- Certain types of children's make-up
- Personal care products
- Some candies imported from countries like Mexico and the Dominican Republic
- Contaminated soil
WHAT IS WE ACT DOING?
WE ACT for Environmental Justice has a long history of lead advocacy. We were instrumental in passing New York City’s Local Law 1 of 2004, which was designed to make the city lead-free by 2010. It mandates that landlords inspect each apartment for lead paint before a new tenant moves in and that they must remEDIATE any lead issues. Unfortunately, the city and its agencies have consistently failed to enforce this law, so WE ACT is working with a coalition of lead advocacy organizations to ensure aggressive enforcement moving forward. And, as part of the coalition, we are also working with elected officials on several new pieces of lead legislation.

At the state level, WE ACT is working with partners to pass the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention and Safe Housing Act. This bill would 1) strengthen enforcement; 2) create a loan fund to assist owners in complying with lead-safe requirements; 3) provide for inspections and certification of inspectors and remediators; 4) require registration of properties with lead; 5) provide tax credits for remediation; 6) appointment of deputy commissioner at NYS HCR to provide oversight; and 7) provide educational programs on lead.

WHAT CAN I DO?
Have your child’s blood lead level tested at ages one and two years, and continue to ask your doctor if your child should receive additional lead screenings up to age six.

Keep your children away from cracked or peeling paint, especially if your house was built before 1978. Also keep them away from construction or remodeling work.

Wash children’s hands before they eat and sleep, especially if they have been playing outdoors.

Wash your hands before preparing food. And wash toys, pacifiers, and other things children may put in their mouth.

Wet-mop floors and wet-wipe furniture, window sills, and other surfaces where dust may collect.

Run cold water for at least one minute before using. And never use hot water from the faucet to make baby formula or for cooking.

In New York City, call 311 for information about getting your child’s blood lead level tested. If you live in NYCHA, call the Maintenance Hotline for lead issues at 718-707-7771.
BECOME A MEMBER:
$25/YEAR

WEACT.ORG/MEMBERSHIP  212.961.1000 EXT. 313