

Statement of Brian Wynne on the Nomination of Nancy Beck to the
Consumer Product Safety Commission.

June 16, 2020

This Nominee Delayed a Ban on the Toxic Chemical that Killed my Brother. Last year, the chemical that killed my brother, Drew, was finally banned from store shelves. My family was relieved when the long-sought-after protection – a nationwide ban on the chemical methylene chloride in paint strippers for consumer uses – was finally adopted. But it was a battle: this ban was first proposed nine months before Drew passed away, and it took over two years before it was finalized. It was originally stronger too: the proposed ban included commercial uses of the paint strippers – to protect workers who are at risk when using the products.

Now, one of the key officials involved in delaying this ban and opposing other regulations on chemicals, Nancy Beck, could be nominated to lead the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) until 2025. This is a small, but critical, agency tasked with protecting Americans from dangers associated with consumer products, from cribs and children's toys to furniture and cleaning products. Nancy Beck is the absolute wrong choice for this role.

Beck started work for this administration at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), straight from her posting as a top executive at the chemical industry's main trade association. One of her first actions at EPA was blocking the proposed ban on methylene chloride in paint strippers – a move at the top of the chemical industry's wish list.

In an [interview with the New York Times](#), Wendy Cleland-Hamnett – who previously led EPA's toxic chemicals office – cited a conversation in which Beck questioned whether the number of deaths from methylene chloride paint strippers warranted a ban on the chemical: “‘Is it 1 percent?’ Ms. Hamnett recalled Dr. Beck asking.” Such callous disregard for people's lives would be concerning for any position – but it is particularly alarming for someone nominated to protect American's health and safety.

Drew was only 31 when he died while using a methylene chloride paint stripper. From that tragedy, my family worked tirelessly to get paint strippers containing this chemical off of store shelves – we lobbied in Washington, urged retailers to stop selling the products, and kept telling Drew's story to draw attention to the problem. We were determined to save other parents and families from the pain that we have felt.

But Nancy Beck will put the safety of American families at risk if she is confirmed to lead the CPSC. In addition to her interference on methylene chloride, she also delayed bans on high-risk uses of another toxic chemical, trichloroethylene (TCE); made systemic changes to weaken how the country's main chemical safety law is carried out; and more. Her record clearly shows that, when making decisions about hazardous chemicals, industry interests outweigh the public's health and safety.

I did not want to have to speak out again – to feel the pain of sharing Drew’s story again – but I knew I needed to do everything possible to stop this dangerous nomination from moving forward. The stakes are too high. My family and I know all too well that the decisions made in Washington about health and safety regulations have real life consequences. We cannot afford to have Nancy Beck in charge of protecting health for years to come.