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Congress Unanimously Passes Formaldehyde Bill Sponsored By Representative Matsui and Senator Klobuchar

Legislation to Protect Consumers and Domestic Manufacturers Is Sent to the President

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, the House of Representatives passed S. 1660, the Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Wood Products Act, a bipartisan bill that was introduced in the Senate by Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and in the House as H.R. 4805 by Congresswoman Doris Matsui (D-CA). The legislation would protect the health of American families from the high use of this toxin in common household items, including hundreds of everyday applications, ranging from paneling and flooring, to cabinets, doors, shelving, molding, and countertops.

The use of formaldehyde impacts public health, and can cause difficulty in breathing in some humans exposed at elevated levels, defined as above 0.1 parts per million. The wood products industry along with environmental, health, and labor organizations worked for more than seven years with the State of California's Air Resources Board (CARB) to establish lower standards for formaldehyde in composite wood products. The phase-in of these new standards is estimated to cut formaldehyde emissions for composite wood products in half to an average of 0.09 parts per million by 2012. Composite wood products are defined as particleboard, medium density fiberboard and hardwood plywood; products made from pieces, chips, particles, fibers or veneers bonded together with a resin.

Congresswoman Matsui managed the bill on the House Floor today, and spoke to the urgent need to pass the consumer protection legislation. Matsui argued that "This legislation will level the playing field for our domestic manufactures by creating one national standard on formaldehyde emissions for both our domestic industry and foreign manufactures to follow. Simply put: we must ensure that faulty foreign wood products do not enter the U.S. market anymore. In doing so, this bill will protect and create American jobs, boost the competitiveness of our domestic manufacturing sector, and ensure that American consumers are not exposed to faulty foreign products with high formaldehyde emissions."

The Klobuchar/Matsui legislation has strong bi-partisan, bi-cameral measure and is widely supported by a diverse coalition comprised of industries, public health advocates, and environmental groups, and consumers. The legislation has been publicly endorsed by the American Forest and Paper Association, the Engineered Wood Association, the Composite Panel Association, the American Home Furnishings Association, the Business & Institutional Furniture Manufacturers Association, the Kitchen Cabinet Manufacturers Association, the Sierra

Club, the United Steelworkers of America, the Retail Industry Leaders Association, and the American Public Health Association among others.

H.R. 4805 was reported out of the Energy and Commerce Committee on which Rep. Matsui serves in a bi-partisan manner by a vote of 27 to 10 on May 26th, 2010. During the Committee debate on this legislation, Rep. Matsui worked collaboratively with the Minority to address any concerns. Those changes were incorporated into the Senate language, and were included in the final legislation. S. 1660 was passed in the House by unanimous consent, after being passed unanimously in the Senate last week. The bill will now be sent to the President for his signature.

To watch the video of Congresswoman Matsui managing the bill on the House floor, please visit her YouTube page: www.youtube.com/RepDorisMatsui

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