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Dollar Tree Offers ‘Copy and Paste’ Sustainability Report, Shows No Progress on Chemical Safety

After Three Years, The Discount Retail Giant Reports No New Policies To Reduce Toxic Chemicals Found In Its Products, Despite Advances By Other Retail Chains

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[Washington, DC] – Today, a coalition of consumers, concerned parents, health experts, business leaders, and scientists responded to Dollar Tree’s recently released 2016 ‘Sustainability Report’ expressing deep concern that the company has made no improvements or adopted new policies to identify and phase out toxic chemicals from products it sells since its last report in 2013. Public health advocates noted that [a comparison of the product safety policy sections](#) in Dollar Tree’s 2013 and 2016 Sustainability Reports are almost word-for-word identical in language and content, with no new actions or policies listed since 2013. Observers are led to believe that one of the nation’s largest retail chains may not have taken any action to further protect the health and safety of its customers and employees now for several years.

Dollar Tree's Self-Reported Product Safety and Sustainability Results	
2013 Sustainability Report	2016 Sustainability Report
"Dollar Tree has been committed to product safety and sustainability for many years. The company began a comprehensive product testing program early in the last decade, using independent laboratories to test, initially, toys and candles. In 2005, Dollar Tree's testing program expanded and it has increased in scope each year thereafter. Today, we test to standards that are often more stringent than either governmental regulation or industry best practices. We are also working on ways to reduce or eliminate the use of PVC in our products and packaging."	"Dollar Tree has been committed to product safety and sustainability for many years. The company began a comprehensive product testing program early in the last decade, using independent laboratories to test, initially, toys and candles. In 2005, Dollar Tree's testing program expanded and it has increased in scope each year thereafter. Today, we test to standards that are often more stringent than either governmental regulation or industry best practices. We are also working on ways to reduce or eliminate the use of PVC in our products and packaging."
"To eliminate potential concerns over lead or cadmium, the Company has advised vendors since 2007 not to use lead in paint, nor to use heavy metals in any products supplied to Dollar Tree."	"To eliminate potential concerns over lead or cadmium, the Company has advised vendors since 2007 not to use lead in paint, nor to use heavy metals in any products supplied to Dollar Tree."
"The Company began testing for phthalates in PVC in early 2008, before there was any legislation requiring such testing."	"We began testing for phthalates in PVC in early 2008, prior to any legislation requiring such testing."

Public health and product safety experts responded to Dollar Tree’s 2016 Sustainability Report by sending [a letter to the CEO](#) of the company, Mr. Bob Sasser, urging the discount retail chain to phase out toxic chemicals found in their products.

Despite assurances offered by Dollar Tree in its report, [independent laboratory testing of products](#) purchased at Dollar Tree locations across the nation found some contained potentially dangerous levels of lead, phthalates, and other toxic chemicals. These substances are linked to serious health impacts, including cancer, learning and developmental disabilities, asthma and birth defects. Since [these findings were made publicly available](#), Dollar Tree has failed to respond to the results of this testing or take any public action, policy improvement, or new policy to protect their customers.

“This cut and paste attempt to paper over the harm caused by dangerous chemicals found in many Dollar Tree products is disrespectful to Dollar Tree investors, customers, and the communities which depend on discount retailers for their products, toys, food, and other household goods,” said **Jose Bravo, Director of the Campaign for Healthier Solutions**. He continued, “It’s hard to imagine that

after three years of improved science on toxic chemicals, improved testing methods to find these chemicals in products, and numerous other major retailers taking action to protect the health and safety of their customers, the only action Dollar Tree has taken is to copy text from its last report three years ago and attempt to pass it off as responsible corporate policy.”

Many communities of color and low-income families rely on discount stores, such as Dollar Tree, as their only sources of household products and sometimes food. Without action by these chains to address the toxic chemicals found in products they sell, these already overburdened communities are unable to avoid even more exposures.

Deyadira Arellano, a community activist and mother from Houston, TX, said, “I don’t want to worry every time I come home from Dollar Tree that my child could suffer learning or developmental disabilities because of toxic chemicals in the products we buy.” She continued, “I started to worry even more once I heard that researchers had found lead and other neurotoxins in products sold at Dollar Tree, especially because we’re already exposed to so much pollution and so many families rely on Dollar Tree for almost everything we bring into our homes. Dollar Tree should do more to protect the communities they serve by making sure we have truly safe and nontoxic products, and not just do the bare minimum required by law.”

Some discount retailers such as [Target and Walmart have taken much more aggressive and comprehensive actions](#) to remove harmful chemicals from products they sell in the last few years. At the moment, the nation’s largest discount retailers (Dollar Tree and its subsidiary Family Dollar, Dollar General, and California-based 99 Cents Only) lag far behind in addressing hazardous chemicals in their products, which puts the communities they serve, disproportionately people-of-color and low-income communities ([A Day Late And A Dollar Short Report, pg. 6](#)), at risk of higher exposure to toxic chemicals.

Product safety advocates noted that other major retailers began implementing policies restricting many hazardous chemicals in response to growing customer demand, as well as to pressure from shareholders and governments to move toward safer products. These leading retail chains have gone above and beyond mere compliance with the law in an effort to offer truly safer, less toxic products in response to growing consumer demand. In meeting this demand, manufacturers and retailers are experiencing great success by delivering safer and healthier products.

A recent report commissioned by the American Sustainable Business Council and the Green Chemistry and Commerce Council, and executed by Trucost, [Making the Business & Economic Case for Safer Chemistry](#), documents the business opportunities available through offering safer products. For example, the 2012-2016 Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) for personal care products based on “safer chemistry” was 10.12%, compared to only 4.4% for conventional products. The 2007-2011 CAGR was 20% for safer cleaning products, compared to only 1.5% for conventional products.

David Levine, CEO of the American Sustainable Business Council, said, “The growing demand by consumers mixed with the increased ability of companies to produce and sell safer products without hazardous chemicals provides a perfect business and economic case for any company to take action. Our research shows there is money to be made in safer, healthier products. This is the opportunity for the Dollar Stores to shift their practices, provide third party verified safer alternatives, and increase profits.”

These product safety and public health experts have renewed their offer, first made in February 2015, to

meet with Dollar Tree executives and discuss further, substantive development of the discount retailer's corporate product safety policies. These experts are also offering to meet with Dollar Tree executives to share their support and experience implementing responsible corporate policies on toxic chemicals with other retailers, as well as innovative business strategies that reflect the consumer needs of communities they operate in.

Background Information:

Full product testing results and methodology can be found here: <http://www.ecocenter.org/healthy-stuff/reports/dollar-store-report>

Photos for use with articles are available upon request.

Leadership to Address Toxic Chemicals in Products Since 2013 (New Policies Adopted, Major Milestones)		
Dollar Tree	Walmart	Target
None	2013: Adopted broad sustainable chemistry initiative eliminating high priority chemicals from many products 2014: Notified suppliers of phase out of high priority chemicals in many products 2014: Co-hosted Beauty and Personal Care Product Sustainability Summit with Target 2015: Required online disclosure of all ingredients in covered products 2016: Publicly released list of 8 high priority chemicals used in 90,000 items 2016: Announced 95% reduction of 8 high priority chemicals in certain products (as result of their 2013 policy)	2013: Adopted broad sustainable product policy rating many products on scores including chemical safety 2014: Co-hosted Beauty and Personal Care Product Sustainability Summit with Walmart 2015: Expanded covered list to over 1,000 chemicals

Sources: Public reporting by Dollar Tree, Walmart, and Target in their corporate Sustainability Reports and on their sustainability web sites or pages, and publicly available information on corporate chemical policies and actions, such as <http://bizngo.org/safer-chemicals/corporate-policies> and <http://www.greenchemistryandcommerce.org/retailer-portal/retailer-chemicals-policy-efforts>.

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