February 5, 2021

Ms. Jane Nishida  
Acting Administrator  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Ave, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20460  
Via email at Nishida.Jane@epa.gov

RE: Restore Safer Choice Program

Dear Acting Administrator Nishida:

We are writing to express our strong support for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Safer Choice Program as well as our concern for its long-term viability. The signatories to this letter represent a unique and broad group of chemical manufacturers, brand owners, environmental non-governmental organizations, small businesses, states and municipalities. During the last four years, resources and leadership have been drained from this critical program. Despite requests to EPA from multiple organizations and the agency’s assurance the Safer Choice program would continue to operate at the same level of service, we have observed that the opposite has occurred.

For most of its existence, this unique and valuable program was organized within its own branch, staffed with as many as 13 full-time employees, including a branch chief, toxicologists and chemists. In the last quarter of 2020, EPA announced a reorganization of the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention (OCSPP) whereby the Safer Choice branch was dissolved and most staff were reassigned to other areas of OCSPP. As a result, the program is now severely under-resourced with approximately four full-time staff. We urge you to fully restore the Safer Choice Program -- a broadly supported, and impactful recognition program that helps drive a market for safer chemicals and products.

Companies across the value chain utilize the Safer Choice brand to advance their individual safer chemical initiatives -- from brand owners to retailers to chemical manufacturers. For example, chemical manufacturers have invested in the difficult task of developing safer chemicals now listed on the Safer Choice’s Safer Chemicals Ingredients List (SCIL). Having chemicals on the SCIL allows these manufacturers to offer best-in-class safer chemicals to the market that carry the robust third-party verification of the EPA. Brand owners and product manufacturers have invested in Safer Choice by undertaking the similarly resource-intensive effort to reformulate products using the SCIL to obtain Safer Choice certification. Major retailers specify the Safer Choice label as a way to verifiably meet corporate goals laid out in public-facing chemicals policies.

The Safer Choice Program also provides value to entities outside of the supply chain. Numerous states and municipalities rely on Safer Choice because it is the only third-party program that requires all ingredients to be screened for hazards instead of simply using a restricted substances list. Several state and local governments specify Safer Choice labeled products in their purchasing contracts as well as point to Safer Choice in public education campaigns and outreach. Non-governmental organizations and consumers find significant value in an authoritative government program that can be trusted to vet safer chemicals and products.
We believe that the Safer Choice Program provides a unique space for product innovation while maintaining high standards for health, safety and functional use. Safe products that work are increasingly important as consumer awareness and concerns grow about the potential harm that many formulated consumer products can pose to their health and the environment.

We respectfully urge you to quickly restore the Safer Choice Branch and its staffing to their previous levels so that they may stabilize the program and serve the constituency they have worked hard to build over the last decade.

Sincerely yours,

Alison Gutterman, CEO Jelmar, LLC
Amanda Heier, President and CEO, Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
American Cleaning Institute
Arylessence
BASF
California Green Business Network
ChemFORWARD
Clean Control Corporation
Cole Hardware
Councilmember Lauren Kuby, City of Tempe, Arizona
Deborah O. Raphael, Director, City of San Francisco Department of the Environment
Dr. Rebecca Spooner Korwin, Executive Vice President, Science and Innovation, State Industrial Products
Dwayne Fuhlhage, Sustainability Director PROSOCO
Ecolab, Inc.
Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo
Environmental Council of the States
Environmental Defense Fund
Firmenich Incorporated
Frederico Marchiori, Head, Institutional Relations - Oxiteno
Green Chemistry & Commerce Council (GC3)
Hartz Mountain Corporation - Joe Conti
Heidi Winner, Santa Clara County Green Business Program
Henkel
ISSA--the Worldwide Association for the Cleaning Industry
Ivannia Perez, Sustainable Works
Jennifer Sass, Senior Scientist, Natural Resources Defense Council
Karen Neal Strobel, President, Strobel Professional Services LLC
Ken Zarker, Section Manager, Washington State Department of Ecology
Larry Dunn, NTTC
Lisa Pankiewicz, Vice President Global Stewardship, The Clorox Company
Massachusetts Toxics Use Reduction Institute
Mike Yang, President, Creative Paint
Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
Moore Environmental Programs
Karl Bruskotter, Sustainable Procurement Advisor, City of Santa Monica
National Pollution Prevention Roundtable
Novozymes
Olivia Bindon, Santa Barbara Green Business Program
Oregon Association of Clean Water Agencies
Procter & Gamble
Raul Gonzalez, Executive Director, Pacific Northwest Pollution Prevention Resource Center
RB (Reckitt Benckiser, LLC)
Rhonda Jones, CEO, Scientific & Regulatory Consultants, Inc.
Richard Whitman, Director, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
Safer Chemicals Healthy Families
San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Regional Agency
Sandrine Cassidy, Board of the California Green Business Program, Program Lead Assessor
Culver City Sustainable Business Certification Program, Irvine Green Business Program
Spartan Chemical Company, Inc.
State Industrial Products
Stephen J. Caldeira, President & CEO, Household & Commercial Products Association
Sunshine Makers, Inc. / Simple Green
Tamsyn Hunnewell, Sustainable Works
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Vince Sewalt, Head Regulatory Science & Advocacy, IFF
Vincent Waclawek, Tech Services Manager, Starbrite
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