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SACRAMENTO, CA – A measure by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control to establish a new framework for chemicals management is drawing criticism from electronics industry trade groups.

The so-called Green Chemistry Initiative proposes to ban many chemicals and mandate use of alternatives. The DTSC has requested public input on seven questions regarding implementation of the initiative by April 23.

According to IPC, the proposed measure is “much worse than RoHS” and would have “major adverse implications for all types of industries including electronics.”

In a statement today, IPC called on its California members to lobby the DTSC against the ban, pending consideration of environmental, social and economic impacts.

At the order of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the DTSC launched a multi-year effort to reduce toxic substance use. The department has developed a list of some 800 options and has convened a panel of 23 scientists and engineers to guide it and provide the technical basis on scientific matters.

Preliminary goals include reducing toxic chemical use 50% by 2010, and develop baselines and targets for lifecycle assessments. Among the options listed in the preliminary findings were to ban hazardous substances in electronics, and set R&D tax credits for finding alternatives. However, the 192-page draft does not specify what those hazardous substances would be.

Final recommendations for a statewide green chemistry framework are due July 1.

IPC, however, argues that such substance bans often result in unintended environmental consequences, citing as evidence the US EPA Lead-Free Solder project, which details environmental tradeoffs inherent in material substitutions.

The EPA is already engaged in an agreement across North America to assess and manage chemicals, IPC noted, and California’s proposed ban “would undermine ongoing efforts of the federal government.”

According to IPC, under the international agreement, the EPA will screen, prioritize and assess nearly all chemicals in US commerce, and develop hazard characterizations, risk characterizations and risk-based management decisions.

The DTSC will hold a workshop on the issue today in San Diego. Visit dtsc.ca.gov/pollutionprevention/greenchemistryinitiative/ for details.