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**Statement of Dr. Harbut on Re-Introduction of the Ban Asbestos in America Act**

My name is Michael Harbut. I am a physician, a teacher at the Wayne State University School of Medicine in Detroit, and a past chair of the occupational and environmental health section of the American College of Chest Physicians. I am also on the Board of Directors of the Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation.

I am thrilled with the courage and wisdom demonstrated by Sen. Murray through the introduction of this bill which would not only ban the use of asbestos products, but also provide for the creation of a series of National Centers which will investigate and develop treatments for the illnesses caused by exposure to asbestos.

This bill helps put the United States in the mainstream of world effort in the reduction of needless suffering and death.

Over the past 12 years I have treated thousands of persons with diseases associated with asbestos. The health effects caused by this fiber range from worry and denials of insurance coverage to the rapidly progressive cancer generally fatal within months of diagnosis—mesothelioma—whose only known cause is asbestos.

In between these two “extremes” are more slowly evolving illnesses. Asbestosis is scarring of the lungs caused by asbestos. Patients often begin to develop shortness of breath on mild exertion from 15-20 years after the initial exposure to the fiber which becomes worse, even long after exposure has ceased. It can result in a markedly reduced ability to move about without a debilitating shortness of breath.

We know that the rates of death from lung cancer increase dramatically about 25 years after asbestos exposures lasting only a few months. We know there is an increased risk of colon cancer among persons exposed to asbestos.

We also know that the wives who washed their asbestos-exposed husband’s clothing also develop asbestosis and die prematurely.

The asbestos fiber does damage far beyond any single family. It has caused an increase in cynicism toward that American Judicial system. It has caused doctors and lawyers to behave unethically. It has institutionalized a system of needless suffering and death.

This bill will change all that. By simply preventing use of the fiber, it will not be able to wreak the havoc at all levels of American life that it has been able to wreak.

I hope the remainder of the Congress and President Bush will see that which is so clear to Sen. Murray and her colleagues. Please pass this bill, and thank you very much, Sen. Murray.