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Testimony by: Joanne Bourbeau

In Support of: H 398, An Act to Require Engine Coolant and Antifreeze to Contain a Bittering Agent so as to Render it Unpalatable

Presented to: Judiciary Committee

Date: July 14, 2009

My name is Joanne Bourbeau, and I am the Senior State Director for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). On behalf of The HSUS and our over 302,000 members and constituents in the state of Massachusetts, and the Humane Society Legislative Fund, a social welfare organization, I would like to submit this written testimony in support of H 398, An Act to Require Engine Coolant and Antifreeze to Contain a Bittering Agent so as to Render it Unpalatable. This legislation would require that antifreeze that is more than 10 percent ethylene glycol must also contain an aversive agent that would render it unpalatable to humans and animals. This legislation will help save countless animal lives and reduce the number of childhood emergencies.

Hundreds of children and thousands of animals (including companion animals and endangered species) are accidentally poisoned each year from ingesting antifreeze. Over the past 3 years, there have been 382 human exposures to antifreeze in Massachusetts reported to the MA/RI poison center. Of these, 71 were children under the age of 12. A veterinary survey suggests the number of animals poisoned nationally could be as high as 90,000. Its sweet taste attracts them, but less than a teaspoonful can be fatal. Several federal laws classify it as a hazardous substance. Children and animals come into contact with it through containers that are not tightly sealed or are discarded carelessly, leaks on driveways and in garages, and spills along the road. Dogs have been known to chew through the containers to get

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at the antifreeze. Unfortunately, antifreeze can also be used to intentionally poison pets.

A national survey reported that 2 out of 3 veterinarians see at least one ethylene glycol poisoning a year. A survey of 21 Nevada veterinary clinics revealed 78 cases of ethylene glycol poisonings, with 67 fatalities, while 13 California veterinary clinics reported 136 cases of antifreeze poisoning in 2001, with 107 deaths.

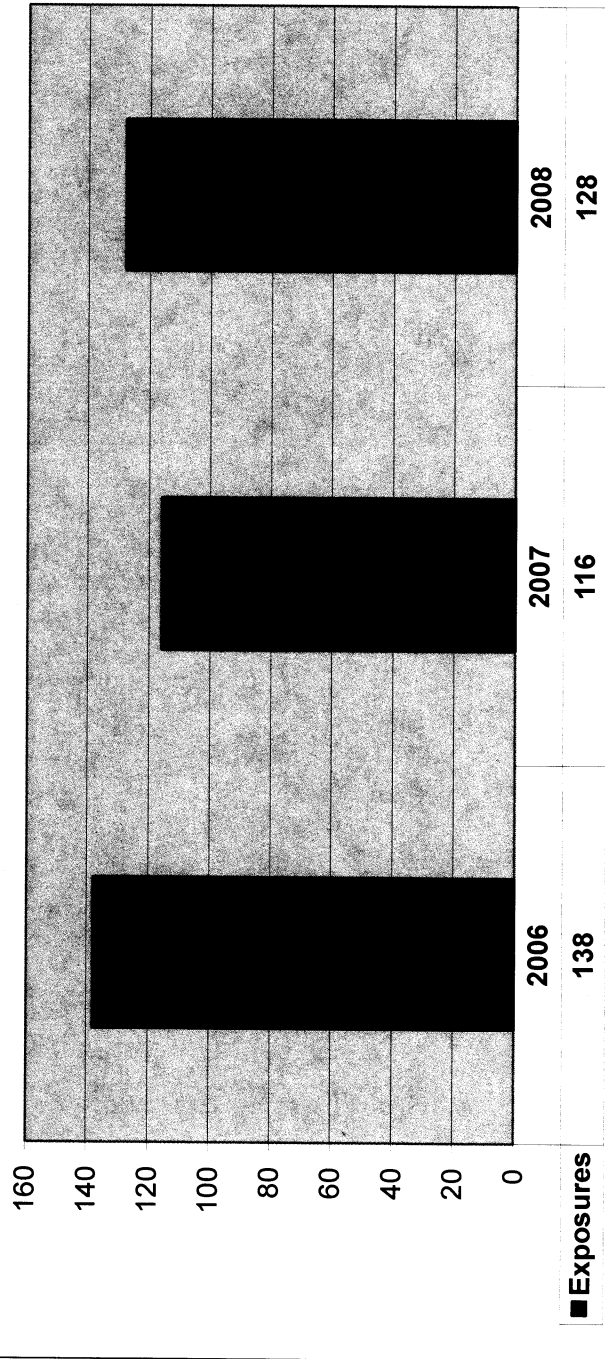
Nine states: Arizona, California, Maine, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, Vermont, Virginia and Washington, already have statutes requiring that a bittering agent be added to antifreeze to make it unpalatable for children and animals. The American Academy of Pediatrics, American Veterinary Medical Association, the Pet Food Institute, The American Association of Poison Control Centers, the American Medical Association, the National Safety Council and the American Journal of Public Health all recommend adding an aversive agent to antifreeze.

We urge Massachusetts lawmakers to make your state the next to take steps to ensure the safety of both children and pets from this avoidable danger.

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Year	Exposures
2006	138
2007	116
2008	128

MA Antifreeze (All Glycols) Human Exposures

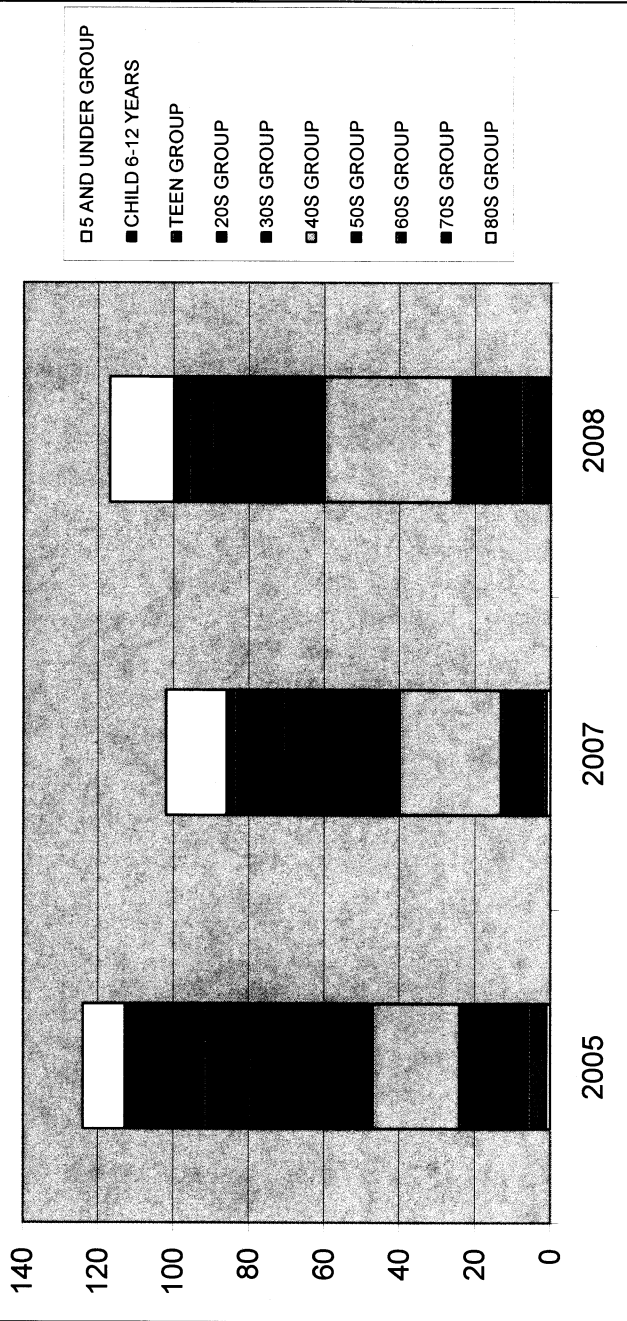


A poisoning case represents a single individual's contact with a potentially toxic substance. A case can be self-reported or from someone calling on behalf of the victim (e.g., health care professional). Not all poisoning cases represent an injury. Sometimes the substance is not toxic or the amount exposed to is not sufficient to cause toxicity. Changes in the case count may represent an actual increase in poisonings or an increase in awareness of the Poison Center and its services.

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	0-5	6-12	13-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85 AND UNDER
2005	0	0	0	5	18	26	15	18	12	21	13
2007	0	0	0	1	11	27	15	16	13	3	19
2008	0	0	0	4	18	34	17	13	6	3	17

MA Antifreeze (All Glycols) Exposures by Age



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