

May 8, 2012

The Honorable Paul Broun
Chairman
House Science, Space and Technology
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
2321 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Hearing “The Science Behind Green Building Rating Systems”

We are a growing coalition of trade associations representing a broad range of makers of materials and building products that contribute to green buildings and we commend you for today’s hearing on the “Science Behind Green Building Rating Systems.” As you consider the scientific basis for the various green building systems, we urge you to also be aware of the significant process limitations inherent in systems which do not utilize a true consensus-based approach, which both introduce and magnify scientific shortcomings. We appreciate this opportunity to bring these concerns to your attention.

Our memberships make building products including insulation, wiring, windows, as well as thousands of raw materials used to make these building products. These building products deliver a wide range of important attributes that together are helping make buildings green and deliver increasing energy efficient homes and buildings for Americans.

Recognizing that the Committee is currently reviewing the science behind green building we would like to make you aware of changes USGBC is proposing for LEED 2012 should cause users to completely re-evaluate and reject the use of the US Green Building Council’s LEED rating system. We share a deep concern that USGBC’s latest iteration of LEED has been developed out of step with federal government criteria, which include process protections such as a true consensus-based approach. This is not a small matter. In a short span of time, LEED has emerged as the dominant green building certification program, both for private and government purchasers. And while certainly LEED has been helpful in improving energy efficiency, USGBC has failed to upgrade its development process. LEED cannot have continued viability with Federal buildings without serious and prompt changes to the process that USGBC uses to change LEED. Our strong view is that the current third draft of LEED 2012 is fatally flawed and must go back to the drawing board with true consensus processes, or be rejected by federal agencies.

Objectivity and transparency in standards development are essential. This is particularly the case when governments incorporate green building programs into laws, regulations and purchasing. The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA) requires the use of consensus in the rating systems used by the Federal Government. OMB Circular A-119 requires consensus-based standards to be much more than aspirational goal and a group vote; they are characterized by (i) openness; (ii) balance of interest; (iii) due process; and (iv) an appeals process. Consensus means there is a process for attempting to resolve objections by interested parties, that all

comments have been fairly considered, each objector is advised of the disposition of his or her objection(s) and the reasons why, and the consensus body members are given an opportunity to change their votes after reviewing the comments. USGBC's processes do not represent true consensus.

And, importantly, standards addressing material specifications are technical standards that use or in this case fail to use science. Technical standards must be developed and evaluated on their technical merits, and this means based on scientific data. A technical standard that is not based on technical data fails on delivery and is unusable. USGBC must adopt true science based consensus approaches or risk the federal government being unable to rely upon LEED. In our view, any portion of LEED 2012 that has been developed where there is a process failure – including a failure to fully and fairly consider science-based input from the signatories to this letter – cannot be adopted by a federal agency.

We support the committee's interest in the science behind green building rating systems and look forward to working with the committee to review shortcomings in LEED 2012.

Center For Environmental Innovation in Roofing
National Association of Manufacturers
American Coatings Association
Resilient Floor Covering Institute
The Vinyl Institute
The Vinyl Siding Institute
The Vinyl Building Coalition
The Plastic Pipe and Fittings Association
Society of Chemical Manufacturers and Affiliates
Flexible Vinyl Alliance
The Canadian Plastics Industry Association
EPDM Roofing Association
Polyisocyanurate Insulation Manufacturers Association
SPI: The Plastics Industry Trade Association
The Adhesive and Sealant Council
The American Chemistry Council
American Architectural Manufacturers Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Single Ply Roofing Institute
Chemical Fabrics And Film Association