Comments
for the
Legislative Education Study Committee
November 18, 1996

Madam Chairman, Committee members, thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you on this issue. My name is Denise Rhodes, representing Ciba-Geigy Corporation. I am here to provide materials for the Committee and make a couple of points.

This committee should not presume that the assumptions or recommendations made in the report on MCS from the Governor's Committee on the Concerns of the Handicapped are supported by the established medical community. MCS/EI has been soundly and repeatedly denied as a recognized disease by the American Medical Association, Academy of Allergy and Immunology and other major medical associations in the U.S.

Considered by the medical community to be a phenomenon, individuals labeled with MCS share the belief that the symptoms they experience are due to chemical sensitivities. This belief is then confirmed by fringe practitioners through anecdotal information given by the individual.

There are real symptoms experienced by individuals labeled with MCS but they have no physical origins.

Under the American Disabilities Act recognition of MCS as a cause for disability is on a case-by-case basis as with all other physical or mental impairments. Among those cases where disability was established for a claimant of environmental sensitivity, the cause was based upon psychological or mental impairment or a physical disorder other than MCS. The intent of the ADA is to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities, not justify the existence of the impairment.

Before making policy decisions about certain accommodations for those labeled with MCS please consider:

Since there is no mechanism for determining the validity of the person's demand for accommodation or to determine when those demands are met, anyone would be eligible to demand accommodation at any time.

This policy would instill a sense of fear in school children, needlessly creating a generation of scared students.

I have provided the Committee with published materials as background information and I urge the Committee to contact the state Medical Association for answers to any questions on MCS.