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RE: Support HB0097

To whom it may concern,

As a public health student at George Washington University, I am writing to express my strong support for HB0097, a pivotal bill aimed at safeguarding the health of Maryland's youngest and most vulnerable population. This legislation is a crucial step forward in public health and consumer transparency.

If one is not worried about lead and other heavy metals in baby food, let me point you to an article published in the American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing. This article points to a study done by Health Babies Bright Futures that found when testing 168 different baby food products, 95% of the foods came back as contaminated with heavy metals. None of which were labeled to inform parents/caregivers about the small particles that are being ingested by their child (Beal, 2020)

The necessity of this bill is underscored by a growing body of scientific evidence indicating the harmful effects of heavy metals on infant health. Exposure to metals such as lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury has been linked to significant developmental delays, cognitive impairments, increased risk for cancer, neurodevelopmental issues, and increased risk of behavioral problems in children (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2023). The World Health Organization (WHO) has also highlighted the dangers of heavy metal exposure. Particularly in vulnerable populations such as infants, who are at a critical stage of brain development (WHO, 2023).

HB0097 not only aligns with the precautionary principle in public health but also empowers consumers by ensuring that baby food products on the shelves in Maryland are subject to rigorous safety standards. Not everyone knows what is in the food they are giving to their child and this bill will help that exact problem. By mandating testing and public reporting, this bill provides parents and caregivers the information they need to make informed choices about the foods they provide to their children.

Furthermore, the requirement for labeling products as tested for heavy metals will enhance industry accountability and encourage manufacturers to adopt safer, more transparent practices. This proactive approach reflects a commitment to preventative health measures, reducing the risk of exposure to these harmful substances from the start.

The U.S House of Representatives Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy suggests that there is subpar testing practice, lenient of absent standards, and limited oversight of food manufacturers that are allowing contaminants in infant and toddler foods (Blair, 2022). HB0097 can help address this issue here in Maryland.

Considering the compelling evidence on the risks associated with heavy metal exposure in early childhood, I urge you to support HB0097. By endorsing this legislation, you will be taking a stand for the health and well-being of our children and for the peace of mind of parents and caregivers across Maryland. Let Maryland lead by example and set a precedent for the protection of public health through informed choice and rigorous safety standards.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue and for your ongoing commitment to the health and safety of our community.

Sincerely,  
Grace VanDeSteeg

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## Works Cited

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