



MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE LATINO CAUCUS

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TO: Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair
Health and Government Operations Committee Members

FROM: Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus

DATE: February 5, 2025

RE: HB0443 – Baby Food Labeling – Statement Regarding Toxic Heavy Metal Testing – Terminology

The MLLC supports HB443 – Baby Food Labeling – Statement Regarding Toxic Heavy Metal Testing – Terminology

The MLLC is a bipartisan group of Senators and Delegates committed to supporting legislation that improves the lives of Latinos throughout our state. The MLLC is a crucial voice in the development of public policy that uplifts the Latino community and benefits the state of Maryland. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to express our support of HB443.

Latino families represent a significant proportion of those participating in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program, with approximately 36.4% of WIC-eligible individuals in 2021 identifying as Hispanic/Latino.¹ Since WIC provides access to baby food products, these families are more likely to encounter foods potentially containing toxic elements. By requiring transparent testing and clear labeling of baby food, this bill addresses these risks and helps families to make informed choices about the products they purchase.

This bill proposes a minor amendment to Maryland's baby food labeling requirements by replacing the term "toxic heavy metal" with "toxic element" and "quick response (QR)" with "QR" on product labels. Under the existing law, baby food exceeding U.S. FDA-established toxic heavy metal limits cannot be sold in the state. Manufacturers are required to test representative samples monthly for toxic elements such as arsenic, cadmium, lead, and mercury using accredited laboratories. With Latino communities more likely to come into contact with foods that contain higher levels of toxic elements, this bill is an important step in improving the safety and quality of baby food for Latino communities.

For these reasons, the Maryland Legislative Latino Caucus respectfully requests a favorable report on HB443.

¹ [U.S. Department of Agriculture. "National and State Level Estimates of WIC Eligibility and Program Reach in 2021." Food and Nutrition Service U.S. Department of Agriculture, 24 July 2024.](#)