



TO: The Honorable Shane E. Pendergrass, Chair
Members, House Health and Government Operations Committee
The Honorable Bonnie Cullison

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
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DATE: February 12, 2020

RE: **SUPPORT** – House Bill 424 – *Public Health – Products Containing a Flame-Retardant Chemical*

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 424.

House Bill 424 would prohibit the sale and import of juvenile products, mattresses, upholstered furniture and reupholstered furniture containing flame-retardant chemicals. Juvenile products are those intended for use in the home by children under 12 years old. Flame retardants are a variety of organic chemicals, several of which are already prohibited under Maryland law, which are added to other products to decrease the spread of fire. However, these flame retardants have been linked to adverse effects which make their continued use an unacceptable health hazard.

Flame retardants are not chemically bound, but rather added to the products in which they are used. As such, these chemicals can be released into the air as microscopic particles and can leach out from treated products into the environment, where they have been found in house dust. They can be absorbed into the human body through inhalation, through oral ingestion and through absorption from the skin. Many of these compounds are very slow to degrade and breakdown, allowing them to persist in the environment. These chemicals have also been found in fish and animal sources of food; because they are fat-soluble, toxic flame retardants can get stored in these animals and become increasingly concentrated going up the food chain. This fat solubility also allows these chemicals to become concentrated in human breast milk.

Children are at particular risk from the toxic effects of these chemicals. They can inhale them when lying or sitting on treated products, which is why it is important to ban the chemicals not only in child and juvenile products such as cribs and youth mattresses but also in other household mattresses and furniture. Their frequent hand-to-mouth behaviors greatly increase their risk of ingestion, particularly from playing on floors with contaminated house dust or from chewing on products treated with flame retardants. Because they are smaller and their ingestion of contaminated dust is greater, children are

exposed to a much higher dose relative to their body weight when compared to an adult. From their time in utero through their years of growth and development, children are at increased risk of toxic effects from chemical substances that can interfere with these developmental processes.

In September 2017, after a petition from many health advocates including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Consumer Product Safety Commission issued a guidance document that recognized the health hazards of organohalogen flame retardants. These adverse effects include reproductive impairment; endocrine disruption and impaired thyroid function; genotoxicity; cancer; and immune disorders. Adverse neurological impacts on children include decreased IQ, learning deficits, impaired memory, altered motor activity and hyperactivity. Animal studies on organophosphate flame retardants found that they induced kidney, bladder, liver and stomach tumors and leukemia in rats.

In House Bill 424, Maryland has the opportunity to reduce exposures to toxic flame retardants. MDAAP, on behalf of the children for whom we provide care, offers this testimony in support of this bill.

For more information call:

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