



Know your environment.
Protect your health.

Testimony of Nneka Leiba

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Environmental Working Group

On H.B. 643

Before the Health and Government Operations Committee

February 16, 2021

Position: Favorable

Chair Pendergrass and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

On behalf of the Environmental Working Group, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 643.

Chemicals and contaminants linked to cancer can be found in food, water and many other everyday products. However, no category of consumer products is subject to less government oversight than cosmetics and other personal care products.

Although many of the chemicals and contaminants in cosmetics and personal care products likely pose little risk, exposure to some of them have been linked to serious health problems, including cancer. Since 2009, 604 cosmetics manufacturers have reported using 95 chemicals, in more than 85,500 products, that have been linked to cancer, birth defects or reproductive harm.¹

Many of these chemicals would be banned by HB 643, including:

¹ California Department of Public Health, California Safe Cosmetics Program, Current Data Summary, <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DEODC/OHB/CSCP/Pages/SummaryData.aspx> (last visited Feb. 11, 2021). The California Safe Cosmetics Act of 2005 requires cosmetic manufacturers to disclose to the California Department of Public Health all products containing ingredients known or suspected to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive toxicity, as determined by certain authoritative scientific bodies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, the National Toxicology Program and the International Agency for Research on Cancer.



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- Formaldehyde, a known carcinogen.
- Paraformaldehyde, a type of formaldehyde.
- Methylene glycol, a type of formaldehyde.
- Quaternium 15, which has been linked to cancer and genotoxicity.
- Mercury, which can damage the brain and nervous system.
- Dibutyl and diethylhexyl phthalates, which disrupt hormones and damage the reproductive system.
- Isobutyl and isopropyl parabens, which disrupt hormones and harm the reproductive system.
- The long-chain per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances known as PFAS, which have been linked to cancer and harm to the immune system.
- M- and o-phenylenediamine, used in hair dyes, which irritate and sensitize the skin, damage DNA and can cause cancer.

All of these toxic chemicals have been banned by the European Union and other nations, and many have been slated for removal from the store brands of major U.S. retailers, including Target, Rite Aid, Walgreens and CVS Health.²

Some of these chemicals do not have to be disclosed on the package, because they are components of fragrance and so are exempt from federal labeling requirements. In particular, the two phthalates that H.B. 643 would ban may be included in combinations of chemicals disclosed on the label as fragrance, but they do not have to be disclosed as individual chemicals.

Many of these chemicals are rarely used in personal care products and will be easy to replace. For example, EWG recently found isobutylparaben and isopropylparaben in just 96 and 12 products, respectively, offered for sale between January 2017 and January 2020.³

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of H.B. 643. I welcome your questions.

² Target, Chemicals, <https://corporate.target.com/corporate-responsibility/planet/chemicals> (last visited Feb. 11, 2021); Rite Aid, Chemical Policy, <https://www.riteaid.com/corporate/chemical-policy> (last visited Feb. 11, 2021); Walgreens Boots Alliance, Restricted Substances List, https://www.walgreens.com/images/adaptive/si/pdf/WalgreensBootsAllianceRestrictedSubstancesList_11082018.pdf (last visited Feb. 11, 2021); CVS Health, Store Brand Restricted Substances List, <https://cvshealth.com/sites/default/files/cvs-health-restricted-chemical-list-by-category.pdf> (last visited Feb. 11, 2021).

³ Environmental Working Group, EWG's Skin Deep® Cosmetics Database, <https://www.ewg.org/skindeep/>.