

Good afternoon, my name is Stephanie White. I am a registered nurse (RN) working in a hospital on the labor and delivery unit, as well as studying online for a master's in public health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. I am writing to express my support for HB0097 to remove lead and other heavy metals from baby food.

It is well established that proper health across a person's lifespan begins in the womb. While it is a parent's job to properly care for their child when they are born, they can only do so with the supplies to which they have access. Therein lies the enormous responsibility of the companies making baby products, especially formula and food, to produce items that will not do harm. Our local, state, and the federal governments bear the responsibility to regulate these products to guarantee their safety. If we want to reduce the burden of disease on the healthcare system, it is essential to ensure that our future generations have a healthy start in life. A baby's food absolutely must be made free of heavy metals.

A 2019 national study tested 168 baby food items, including snacks, juices, and formula, from 61 different brands, and it was discovered that 95% of the items tested contained between one and four heavy metals (Beal, 2022). Ingesting heavy metals, especially at a very young age, can have detrimental effects on energy levels, organ and brain function, neurological processes, and can lead to cancer (Jaishankar et al, 2014). Lead is especially dangerous for children and can cause birth defects, autism, hyperactivity, brain and kidney damage, and death (Jaishankar et al, 2014).

As a parent myself, I want the best of the best for my children. As a nurse, I work many hours and do not have the luxury of time to make my own baby food. Therefore, I rely 100% on what I purchase at the grocery store, as do most parents living and working in the US. I find the results of this study truly heartbreaking, as I now know that I have fed toxins to my child over a period

of years. As a healthcare professional, I am also devastated to now know that the formula I have fed to my newborn patients in the hospital may have contained heavy metals.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please support HB0097 so our children start their lives out strong and healthy. Maryland could be an excellent example for the rest of the country.

Regards,

Stephanie White, RN-C BSN

References

- 1) Beal, Judy A. DNSc, RN, FNAP, FAAN. Heavy Metals in Baby Food: What Providers and Parents Need to Know. MCN, The American Journal of Maternal/Child Nursing 45(2): pg 125, March/April 2020. | DOI: 10.1097/NMC.000000000000060
- 2) Jaishankar M, Tseten T, Anbalagan N, Mathew BB, Beeregowda KN. Toxicity, mechanism and health effects of some heavy metals. Interdiscip Toxicol. 2014 Jun;7(2):60-72. doi: 10.2478/intox-2014-0009. Epub 2014 Nov 15. PMID: 26109881; PMCID: PMC4427717.