

HB1533_SB656_PGCC_FAV v.1 .pdf

Uploaded by: Jabari Cooper

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

(301) 952-3700
County Council

March 3, 2026

House Health Committee

Public Health – Cosmetic Products – Enforcement and Penalties for Prohibited Ingredients (Crown and Care Act – Protecting Communities from Harmful Hair Chemicals)

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Bagnall, Vice Chair Cullison, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Prince George's County Council, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1355, which strengthens enforcement related to cosmetic products containing prohibited harmful ingredients and provides additional accountability measures to protect consumers.

House Bill 1355 builds upon existing State law that restricts the manufacture, sale, and distribution of cosmetic products containing certain toxic substances by establishing clear enforcement mechanisms, including civil liability for violations and investigative authority for the Maryland Department of Health. These provisions help ensure that consumer protections already enacted by the State are meaningful and enforceable in practice.

From a local government perspective, protecting residents from exposure to harmful chemicals is an important public health priority. Communities across Prince George's County include many individuals who regularly use personal care and cosmetic products, and stronger enforcement of safety standards can help reduce preventable health risks. Policies that promote safer consumer products also contribute to long-term public health outcomes and reduce potential burdens on local health systems.

The bill also advances health equity considerations. Research has shown that certain hair and cosmetic products containing hazardous chemicals are disproportionately marketed to and used by communities of color. Strengthening enforcement and accountability helps ensure that all residents — regardless of race, ethnicity, or income — receive the same level of consumer protection and product safety.

Importantly, House Bill 1355 provides a balanced approach by reinforcing existing standards rather than creating entirely new regulatory structures. By clarifying enforcement authority and remedies, the legislation promotes compliance while supporting public confidence in product safety protections.

For these reasons, the Prince George's County Council respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1355.

Thank you for your consideration.

Prepared by: Ashlar Government Relations on behalf of Prince George's County Council

Wayne K. Curry Administration Building – Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

Crown Care Act SB656 - One Pager.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Shaneka Henson

Position: FAV

SB656/HB1533

Crown and Care Act

Protection from Harmful Hair Chemicals

Sponsored by: Senator Shaneka Henson | Delegate Tiffany Alston

The Enforcement Gap: Toxic Hair Chemicals Are Still Being Sold in Maryland

In 2025, Maryland banned several harmful chemicals in cosmetic products, including formaldehyde, phthalates, parabens, mercury, and PFAS. However, these dangerous chemicals remain on store shelves across Maryland.

These Products Harm Women

- These chemicals are linked to serious health risks, including cancer, infertility, fibroids, and hormone disruption—and Black women are disproportionately impacted:
- Black women are 50% more likely to use chemical hair straighteners, increasing exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals.
- NIH research found frequent users of chemical hair straighteners face more than double the risk of uterine cancer.
- Black women develop uterine fibroids at 2-3 times the rate of white women and at younger ages.
- Many of these chemicals are already banned or restricted in the European Union, yet remain widely available in U.S. products.

What the Crown & Care Act Does?

- Strengthens enforcement of Maryland's existing chemical ban
- Ensures the law is enforceable by the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division to investigate violations and pursue injunctive relief, restitution, civil penalties, and damages
- Allows courts to award:
 - Attorney's fees
 - Tripple damages for knowing violations
 - Punitive damages where appropriate
- Establishes a restitution and research fund where civil penalties and restitution will fund medical screening, treatment, and research related to fibroids, uterine cancer, hair loss, and related health conditions

Why The Crown & Care Act Matters

Maryland banned harmful chemicals in cosmetic products in 2025, but these products remain on store shelves due to limited enforcement and accountability. SB 656 closes this gap by strengthening enforcement authority, establishing meaningful penalties, and ensuring both the Attorney General and affected consumers can hold manufacturers accountable and remove dangerous products from the market.

SB0656sponsor testimonyFeb26.pdf

Uploaded by: Senator Shaneka Henson

Position: FAV

SHANEKA HENSON
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**SB0656 – Public Health – Cosmetic Products
Enforcement and Penalties for Prohibited Ingredients (Crown and Care Act)**

Chair Beidle, Vice Chair Hayes and committee members.

For the record, I am Shaneka Henson, representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County and member of the JPR Committee.

I am here today to urge a favorable report on Senate Bill SB0656 – Public Health – Cosmetic Products – Enforcement and Penalties for Prohibited Ingredients (Crown and Care Act)

The intent of this legislation is to protect women from harmful chemicals produce in numerous hair products and ensure real accountability for consumer safety.

In 2025, Maryland took a major step by banning several dangerous chemicals in cosmetic products, including formaldehyde, phthalates, parabens, mercury, and PFAS. However, these toxic products remain on store shelves due to limited enforcement and accountability.

The Crown & Care Act closes this enforcement gap by strengthening the Attorney General’s authority to investigate violations, pursue civil penalties and restitution, and ensures that consumers harmed by illegal products have meaningful legal remedies.

A vital component in the legislation is establishing a restitution and research fund to support medical screening, treatment, and research related to fibroids, uterine cancer, hair loss, and other related conditions disproportionately affecting Black women.

This legislation is supported by a broad and growing coalition of public health advocates, medical professionals, consumer protection leaders, and community organizations committed to advancing health equity and consumer safety. In fact, many of these chemicals are already banned or restricted in the European Union yet remain widely available in US products.

Your support and vote to approve this bill would bring powerful visibility to this effort and help ensure meaningful protection for future generations. After hearing the testimony from our experts and others, we urge a favorable vote of the committee.

SB0656 Testimony_ Favorable with Amendments .pdf

Uploaded by: Coren Makell

Position: FWA

Testimony: Favorable with Amendments - SB0656

To: The Senate Finance Committee

From: Coren Makell, Esthetician MD

Position: Favorable with Amendments

The Core Conflict: Health vs. Livelihood

While we support the mission of the **Crown and Care Act** to remove carcinogens like formaldehyde and PFAS from our community, we must address the "Shelf-Gap" crisis this bill could create. Currently, these ingredients are not just additives; they are functional staples in:

- **Preservation:** Lipsticks, blushes, and edge controls.
- **Structural Integrity:** Braiding hair and extensions.
- **Chemical Services:** Relaxers, keratin treatments, and smoothing balms.

The Major Economic Risk

If SB0656 passes without amendments to support the **supply chain transition**, we risk a "Barren Shelf" scenario. Maryland is one state; large manufacturers may choose to stop shipping to our salons rather than reformulate just for us.

- **Statewide Unemployment:** Stylists and nail technicians cannot perform services without products. If 80% of products marketed to Black women are impacted, this becomes a targeted economic blow to Black-owned small businesses.
- **Service Disruption:** Without functional replacements for preservatives and smoothing agents, stylists lose the ability to provide high-demand services safely.

Proposed Amendments for a Sustainable Transition

To ensure this bill protects people without destroying the industry, we propose the following:

1. The "Alternative Discovery" Mandate

The bill should not just ban; it must **fund**. We request an amendment requiring the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to partner with the **State Board of Cosmetologists** to publish a "Green-List" of vetted, accessible, and high-performance alternative products.

Reasoning: Stylists should not have to be chemists to find out what is legal to use.

2. Manufacturer Reformulation Incentives

Instead of simply penalizing retailers, Maryland should offer tax credits or "Safe-Beauty" grants to smaller manufacturers—especially Black-owned beauty brands—to help them cover the R&D costs of switching to safer preservatives.

3. Phased Enforcement by Category

Rather than a blanket July 1, 2026 cutoff for all products, enforcement should be staggered based on the availability of alternatives.

- **Immediate Ban:** Products with direct, high-hazard exposure (e.g., formaldehyde-heavy relaxers).
- **Extended Grace Period:** Complex formulations (e.g., specific preservatives in lipsticks or hair extensions) where stable alternatives are still being developed.

4. Stylist Protection Clause

Provide a "Good Faith" safe harbor for licensed professionals. If a stylist unknowingly uses a product still on the market that contains a banned ingredient, the penalty should fall on the manufacturer or distributor, not the individual service provider.

Closing Thought

We cannot achieve "Beauty Justice" if the result is empty salons and unemployed stylists. We ask the committee for a **Favorable Report with Amendments** to ensure that when we take the poison out of the products, we aren't also taking the products out of the hands of the professionals who need them to survive.

HB1533 – The Crown and Care Act.pdf

Uploaded by: Taijhe Belt

Position: FWA

Subject: Testimony in Support of SB656/HB1533 – The Crown and Care Act

To: Shaneka Henson and Members of the Committee

Dear Senator Henson and Esteemed Members of the Committee:

My name is Taijhe Belt, and I am writing to you today as a Licensed Cosmetologist of 12 years to urge the swift enforcement and strengthening of Maryland's ban on toxic hair and beauty chemicals through SB656/HB1533, the Crown and Care Act.

While Maryland took a bold step in 2025 by banning harmful substances such as formaldehyde, parabens, and PFAS, these toxins remain on store shelves because of an enforcement gap. For Black women, this is a matter of life and death. We are 50 percent more likely to use chemical straighteners and face two to three times the rate of uterine fibroids compared to white women.

As we move toward enforcement, we must ensure that the solution does not destabilize the livelihoods of Black stylists or limit access to culturally essential hair care products.

The Scope of the Crisis

The chemicals targeted by this bill are not limited to a few niche products. They are systemic and serve as preservatives and active ingredients in the staples of the Black beauty industry, including:

Essential Styling Products

- Edge controls
- Lace glues
- Heat-resistant serums
- Braiding hair

Color and Texture Treatments

- Relaxers
- Keratin treatments

- Hair colors
- Smoothing balms

Everyday Cosmetics

- Shampoos and conditioners
- Mascara and eyeliner
- Lipsticks

Black consumers already face a disparity of hundreds to thousands fewer product options compared to other demographics. We cannot afford a removal strategy that leaves our shelves empty and our stylists without the tools they need to serve their clients.

Preventing “Weaponized Incompetence” and Unemployment

Without a strategic transition plan, enforcement could result in what I describe as weaponized incompetence. If the state removes every product containing banned ingredients without requiring reformulated alternatives, we risk triggering a statewide unemployment spike in the beauty industry.

Manufacturers may choose to leave the Maryland market rather than update their formulas for a single state. To prevent this outcome, the Crown and Care Act must prioritize reformulation in addition to removal.

The law should require that:

- Toxic ingredients are banned and replaced with safe alternatives.
 - Reformulated, non-harmful versions of these products remain available in Maryland.
 - Manufacturers are incentivized or required to meet updated safety standards instead of abandoning the market.
-

Learning from Other States: Transition and Compliance Support

To protect small businesses and stylists during this transition, Maryland can adopt offset and support models already implemented elsewhere.

Financial Reimbursement

- Follow the model of the Washington State Department of Ecology, which has supported safer salon initiatives by providing reimbursements of up to \$5,000 to help small salons replace toxic inventory with safer alternatives.

Clear Compliance Pathways

- Establish a reasonable phase-out timeline similar to Washington's 2026 framework.
- Provide a publicly accessible database of verified, professional-grade clean beauty products.

Manufacturer Accountability

- Utilize the authority of the Maryland Attorney General to hold manufacturers financially responsible for reformulation costs.
- Ensure that the burden does not fall solely on Black stylists, who already face disproportionate health risks and economic vulnerability.

Conclusion

We deserve beauty without a chemical tax on our lives.

We want the companies that profit from Black hair to value Black health enough to change their ingredients, not simply withdraw from our markets.

By enforcing SB656/HB1533 with a focus on restitution, research, and transition support, Maryland can lead the nation in protecting both the health and economic future of Black beauty professionals.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB656/HB1533.

Sincerely,

Taijhe Belt
Cosmetologist- GSB Lounge