

## Fill the Gap in Cosmetics Disclosure Laws: Hidden Toxic Chemicals and Salon Worker Health

# AB 2775

### Women working in salons are increasingly reporting health concerns

Most nail salon workers are of reproductive age and are often Vietnamese immigrants with limited English skills. Exposure to harmful chemicals among this immigrant group is exacerbated by difficulty in accessing ingredient information and information on how to prevent exposures. Vietnamese nail salon workers may have an increased risk of gestational diabetes and delivering low birth weight babies. (1)

Hairdressers and cosmetologists may be more likely to give birth to low birth weight babies (2) especially when their work involves using hairspray and permanent waves. Studies looking at hairdressers have found an increased risk of miscarriage and babies born with cleft palates and other birth defects. In addition, hairdressers were shown to have greater risks of dying from three neurological conditions including, Alzheimer's disease, presenile dementia, and motor neuron disease, compared to workers in other jobs. (3) Exposures faced by Black hair care professionals and consumers are of special concern: Black women generally experience more aggressive forms of cancer and have higher mortality rates from the disease as well as less access to treatment. (4) They also bear the burden of higher rates of miscarriage, low birth weights, and infant deaths compared to non-Hispanic white women.

1. Quach, Thu, et al, Adverse birth outcomes and maternal complications in licensed cosmetologists and manicurists in California, *Int Arch Occup Environ Health* (December 2014).

2. Rylander.L "Reproductive Outcome among Female Hairdressers. "Occupational and Environmental Medicine 59.8 (2002): 517-22

3. Beauty and it's Beast <http://www.womensvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Beauty-and-Its-Beast.pdf>

4. A population is a health disparities population if there is a significant disparity in the overall rate of disease incidence, prevalence, morbidity, mortality or survival rates in the population as compared to the health status of the general population. *Minority Health and Health Disparities Research and Education Act United States Public Law 106-525 (2000) p.2498*

#### WHAT AB 2775 CALLS FOR

AB 2775 will require manufacturers to list ingredients on the labels of professional cosmetic products sold in California, excluding fragrance and colorants. Hair stylists, nail manicurists, and other salon and barber professionals have a right-to-know what chemicals they are being exposed to in the workplace.

#### WHY WE NEED AB 2775

The predominantly female nail and hair salon workforce regularly and often handles nail polish remover, glues, polishes, straighteners, and other beauty care products containing a multitude of chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer, and respiratory, neurological, and reproductive harm.

Although manufacturers are legally required to list ingredients on the labels of cosmetics sold at the retail level, they have no similar legal obligation when it comes to professional cosmetics. This lack of transparency hampers beauty professionals' ability to make informed choices about the products they use and measures they can take to protect their health. It also obstructs their ability to inform customers about the presence of unsafe chemicals used in these products.

## CHEMICALS IN PRODUCTS

Some of the most hazardous chemicals in nail and hair salon products include the following:

- Formaldehyde - a carcinogen which is known to cause asthma and allergic dermatitis, may be linked to reproductive harm, and irritates the eyes, nose, throat and skin. Found in many hair straightening products.
- Toluene - a neurological and a developmental toxicant that can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, symptoms similar to drunkenness, loss of short-term memory and may contribute to spontaneous abortions. (5)
- Sodium hydroxide (lye) - extremely corrosive and can cause pain, redness, burns, and blistering and result in permanent scarring. Can also cause eye damage. This chemical has also been linked to uterine fibroids. (6)
- Triphenyl phosphate (TPhP) - a suspected endocrine disruptor and a concern at low doses. Can be absorbed through the nails or skin.

The rampant mislabeling and the lack of legally mandated ingredient disclosure adds to hair and nail salon professionals' dangerous predicament. Manufacturers have labeled nail polishes and hair straighteners as free of the highly toxic chemicals, dibutyl phthalate, toluene, or formaldehyde even though one or more of those ingredients were in the product. No enforcement action was brought against the nail polish manufacturer who misrepresented the polishes' ingredients. (7)

5. <https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/phs/phs.asp?id=159&tid=29>

6. Wise, LA., J.R. Palmer, D. Reich, Y.C. Cozier, and L. Rosenberg. "Hair Relaxer Use and Rise of Uterine Leiomyomata in African American Women." *American Journal of Epidemiol-* ogy 175.5 (2012): 432-40

7. CA DTSC Report (April 2012)

[https://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/upload/NailSalon\\_Final.pdf](https://www.dtsc.ca.gov/PollutionPrevention/upload/NailSalon_Final.pdf)



**51,000**

Businesses licensed by the Board of Barbering and Cosmetology to provide nail, hair, barber, and other beauty services in CA



**130,000**

Licensed manicurists in CA



**314,500**

Cosmetologists are licensed to provide nail and hair services