



Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color & Professional Salon Workers Act of 2021 HR 5540
Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) & Rep. Blunt-Rochester (D-DE)

SUMMARY

The Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2021 would federally mandate full salon product ingredient disclosure; access to translated safety data sheets; funding for research grants to identify chemicals of concern and the health impacts from cosmetics and personal care products used by these communities; funding for the development of green chemistry safer alternatives; FDA consultation with community stakeholders on ingredient review; and the creation of an inter-agency task force to share data and generate solutions to the toxic exposures experienced by these at-risk populations.

BACKGROUND

Professional salon workers and communities of color bear a disproportionate burden of toxic exposures because of where they work, the products they work with and the toxic products marketed to them. Thousands of industrial chemicals are used to make the personal care and beauty products that communities of color and professional nail, hair and beauty salon workers use every day and many of these chemicals are linked to serious harm to human health.

Potentially hazardous exposures for nail and hair salon workers include, but are not limited to, polish hardeners, thinners, plasticizers, bleaches, conditioners, detergents, dyes, fixatives, relaxers and straighteners that are most often used as commercially prepared mixtures.ⁱ

Although manufacturers are legally required to list ingredients on the labels of cosmetics sold at the retail level, there is no similar legal obligation when it comes to professional cosmetics. This lack of transparency hampers the ability of beauty professionals to make informed choices about the products they use and steps 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.

It is often difficult, sometimes even impossible, for salon workers to obtain Safety Data Sheets (SDS) which contain essential information on the health hazards associated with the salon product ingredients they are working with. Lack of access to Safety Data Sheets is

compounded by language barriers that many salon workers experience.

PROBLEM

Six days/week, 8-10 hours/day, nail and hair salon workers are exposed to an array of dangerous chemicals from professional/personal care products, and the cumulative impact of these exposures over time are cause for concern.ⁱⁱ

One survey showed that 10% of nail salon staff worked while they were pregnant, and 8% of workers knew a worker who had reproductive complications, such as birth defects, miscarriages, stillbirths, and difficulty with conceiving.ⁱⁱⁱ In a population-based retrospective study of cosmetologists and manicurists in California, researchers found that women who work in this industry are at greater risk for adverse birth outcomes and maternal health complications.^{iv} Additionally, those working with acrylic nails were more likely to report health problems, such as nose irritation, allergies, skin irritation, stress, pain, coughing, nausea, difficulty breathing, asthma as well as miscarriages.^v

The work environment of hairdressers has also been reported to contain exposures that can be harmful for reproductive health and can cause cancer, skin irritation, and allergic diseases.^{vi}

The combination of hazardous chemicals, inadequate access to information, lax regulatory standards and enforcement, and a large immigrant workforce with cultural and language obstacles underscores the need for stronger federal cosmetic safety protections for this particularly vulnerable population.

In their personal lives, women of color also suffer from a higher level of exposure to unsafe chemicals in the beauty products aggressively marketed to them – including hair dyes, hair relaxers and straighteners, skin lighteners, feminine douches, and some deodorants. These products contain chemicals linked to breast and ovarian cancer, uterine fibroids, reproductive harm, and more. This toxic exposure is of particular concern to Black women because they purchase and use more beauty products per capita than any other demographic and face many health disparities, including the highest breast cancer mortality rate of any U.S. racial or ethnic group.

Studies show that women of color have higher levels of beauty product-related environmental chemicals in their bodies and even small exposures to toxic chemicals over time can trigger adverse health consequences.^{vii} For instance, a recent NIEHS study found higher rates of breast cancer associated with the use of hair straighteners and permanent hair dye among black women: African American women who regularly dye their hair face a 60% increased risk of breast cancer compared to an 8% increased risk for white women.^{viii}

CURRENT STATE LAWS

In 2018, California enacted AB 2775 (Kalra) – which requires ingredients to be listed on professional cosmetic products labels.

In 2019, California enacted AB 647 (Kalra) -which requires manufacturers to post Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for cosmetics and disinfectants on their websites. SDS must be translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Korean.

SOLUTION

The Strengthening Cosmetics Safety for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2021 would:

1. Create a grants program to research the chemicals of concern in products marketed to communities of color and used by professional beauty, hair and nail salon workers; the marketing tactics used by companies to sell these products; and develop community and salon education and interventions to respond to the problem.
2. Create an EPA grants program to create green chemistry solutions to hazardous chemicals in beauty products marketed to women of color and used by professional salon workers.
3. Require disclosure of ingredients in professional salon products, on product labels and on manufacturer websites.
4. Require the increased access to Safety Data Sheets (SDS) by salon owners and salon workers; and translated SDS in English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish and other languages upon request.
5. Create an Interagency Council for the purpose of sharing data and promoting collaboration on

cosmetic safety concerns impacting communities of color, salon workers and other vulnerable populations.

6. Authorize the Secretary to request and utilize toxicity, use, exposure and safety data for chemicals used in cosmetics from other federal agencies and reputable sources.
7. Direct the FDA to consult with the Office of Minority Health and convene a meeting and advisory committee of community stakeholders to identify and consider ingredients linked to adverse health effects in salon workers and women and girls of color.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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