



H.R. 3620 Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color & Professional Salon Workers Act of 2023

Rep. Schakowsky (D-IL) & Rep. Blunt-Rochester (D-DE)

SUMMARY

The Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2023 would federally mandate 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; and funding for the creation of two national resource centers focused on Beauty Justice and Health and Safety Protections for Professional Salon Workers.

BACKGROUND

Professional salon workers and communities of color are over-exposed to hazardous chemicals 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 health harm.

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

Hazardous chemicals are found in professional salon products that harm the lungs, cause allergic skin reactions, and are linked to reproductive harm and cancer. Despite decades of warnings about these chemicals from public health officials and known harm to salon workers, very **little safer chemistry innovation is evident** in the professional salon product industry. The few harmful ingredients removed from products have been replaced with **equally toxic or more toxic alternatives.** ⁱⁱ

Manufacturers frequently provide product **safety instructions** that make it **near impossible to use products in a way that avoids harm.** And, despite new laws requiring ingredient disclosure, some salon products are still sold without an ingredient list on the label.

It is often difficult, sometimes even impossible, for salon workers to obtain Safety Data Sheets (SDS), which contain essential health hazard information about salon product ingredients. Lack of access to Safety Data Sheets is compounded by language barriers that many salon workers experience. For example, in the nail salon industry, 76% of manicurists are Asian, and 79% are foreign-born, most in Vietnam.

PROBLEM

For eight to ten hours a day, nail and hair salon workers are exposed to an array of dangerous chemicals from professional and personal care products. The cumulative impact of these hazardous exposures over time is cause for serious concern. 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. ^v A New York survey showed that manicurists experienced reproductive health issues double the general population's rate. They had over double the rate of complications during pregnancy and babies born with birth defects. ^{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, and miscarriages. ^{vi}



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

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

In their personal lives, women of color also suffer from a higher level of exposure to the hazardous chemicals in the beauty products aggressively marketed to them. These products include hair dyes, hair relaxers and straighteners, skin lighteners, feminine douches, and some deodorants. They 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 Black women 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. ^{viii} 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. ^{ix}

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), requiring manufacturers to post Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for cosmetics and disinfectants on their websites. In addition, 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 increased access to Safety Data Sheets (SDS) by salon owners and salon workers; and translate SDS into English, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and other languages upon request.
4. 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.

Authorize the creation of 2 Centers of Excellence on Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color and Salon Worker Health and Safety to serve as central clearinghouses for resource materials creation and dissemination, network coordination, public outreach, and education.

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