



# Cosmetic Safety Protections for Communities of Color & Professional Salon Workers of 2025

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## SUMMARY

The Cosmetic Safety for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2025 would federally mandate access to translated safety data sheets; funding for research grants to identify chemicals of concern in beauty and personal care products marketed to these already vulnerable populations; 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.

## PROBLEM

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.

For eight to ten hours a day, nail and hair salon workers are exposed to an array of dangerous chemicals and the cumulative impact of these hazardous exposures over time is cause for serious concern.<sup>i</sup>

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.<sup>ii</sup> 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.<sup>iii</sup> 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.<sup>iv</sup>

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.<sup>v</sup>

Potentially hazardous exposures for nail and hair salon workers come from many different products, including nail polish hardeners and thinners, plasticizers, bleaches, conditioners, detergents, dyes, fixatives, relaxers, and straighteners, which are often used as commercially prepared mixtures.<sup>vi</sup>

Hazardous chemicals in professional salon products can 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 the 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.<sup>vii</sup>

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.

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.

## **TOXIC PRODUCTS MARKETED TO WOMEN OF COLOR**

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.<sup>viii</sup> For example, 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.<sup>ix</sup>

## **SOLUTION**

The Cosmetic Safety Protections for Communities of Color and Professional Salon Workers Act of 2025 would:

- Create two separate grant programs 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.
- Create a grant program to develop green chemistry solutions to hazardous chemicals in beauty products marketed to women of color and used by professional salon workers.
- Require the increased availability of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) translated into Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish and other languages upon request.
- Authorize the creation of two Centers of Excellence on Cosmetic Safety for communities of color and professional salon workers, to serve as a central clearinghouse for resource materials creation and dissemination; network coordination; public outreach and education, etc.
- Direct the FDA to regulate the safety of synthetic braids and require manufacturers that do not meet an established FDA safety standard to have posted on their products and websites a warning label to consumers that “this product does not meet the FDA’s standard of safety.”

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT**

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<sup>i</sup> Sharma, Preeti et al., (2018). Nail Files: A Study of Nail Salon Workers and Industry in the United States.

<sup>ii</sup> Quach T, Von Behren J, Goldberg D, Layefsky M, Reynolds P. Adverse birth outcomes and maternal complications in licensed cosmetologists and manicurists in California. *Int Arch Occup Environ Health*. 2014 Dec 14

<sup>iii</sup> California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative. (2011). Toxic Beauty No More! Retrieved from [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5783e9b9be6594e480435ffe/t/58f44a7646c3c4fe785ebe8c/1492404857878/Nail-Salon-Report-2011.short\\_.english.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5783e9b9be6594e480435ffe/t/58f44a7646c3c4fe785ebe8c/1492404857878/Nail-Salon-Report-2011.short_.english.pdf)

<sup>iv</sup> White, H., Khan, K., Lau, C., Leung, H., Montgomery, D., & Rohlman, D. (2015). Identifying Health and Safety Concerns in Southeast Asian Immigrant Nail Salon Workers. *Archives of Environmental & Occupational Health*, 70(4), 196–203. doi:10.1080/19338244.2013.853644

<sup>v</sup> Quiros-Alcala L, Pollack AZ, Tchangalova N, DeSantiago M, Kavi LKA. Occupational exposures among hair and nail salon workers: a scoping review. *Curr Environ Health Rep*. 2019;6(4):269–285. doi: 10.1007/s40572-019-00247-3

<sup>vi</sup> Labrèche F, Forest J, Trottier M, Lalonde M, Simard R. Characterization of chemical exposures in hairdressing salons. *Appl Occup Environ Hyg*. 2003;18(12):1014–1021. doi: 10.1080/10473220390244667. Pak VM, Powers M, Liu J. Occupational chemical exposures among cosmetologists: risk of reproductive disorders. *Workplace Health Saf*. 2013;61(12):522–528. doi: 10.1177/216507991306101204

<sup>vii</sup> Women's Voices for the Earth. (2023, March). Salon Label Report: Exposed Ingredients in Salon Products, Salon Worker Health and Safety. Retrieved from <https://womensvoices.org/exposed-ingredients-in-salon-products-salon-worker-health-and-safety/>

<sup>viii</sup> Zota, Ami R, and Bhavna Shamasunder. “The environmental injustice of beauty: framing chemical exposures from beauty products as a health disparities concern.” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology* vol. 217,4 (2017): 418.e1-418.e6. doi:10.1016/j.ajog.2017.07.020

<sup>ix</sup> Eberle, Carolyn E, et al. “Hair dye and chemical straightener use and breast cancer risk in a large US population of black and white women.” *International Journal of Cancer* vol. 147,2 (2020): 383–391. doi:10.1002/ijc.32738