Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Dr. Martin Makary, Commissioner
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

RE: Immediate Action Needed to Finalize Formaldehyde Ban in Hair-Straightening Products

Dear Commissioner Makary,

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take immediate action to ban the use of formaldehyde in hair-straightening products. Formaldehyde exposure poses severe and well-documented health risks to consumers and salon workers. Given the FDA's repeated delays, we call on you to release the proposed rule to ban formaldehyde in hair straighteners within your first 90 days in office to prevent further harm and protect public health.

The FDA has repeatedly pushed back its self-determined timeline for releasing the proposed rule, with the most recent action date of March 2025 having yet again passed without action or explanation. We understand the complexities of regulatory processes, particularly during a time of administrative transition, but it is deeply concerning that nearly 3,500 FDA employees—nearly 19% of your agency's total workforce—are being laid off while critical matters remain unaddressed, including the long-awaited formaldehyde rule. Meanwhile, salon workers and consumers continue to be exposed to known health risks, including cancer, respiratory illnesses, and other chronic conditions. The FDA has had ample time to develop a strong proposed rule to safeguard public health. We are looking to your leadership to end any further delay in the rule's release.

Formaldehyde is linked to cancer, respiratory issues, and other chronic health conditions. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has raised concerns about formaldehyde exposure in salons for over 15 years, citing reports of respiratory problems,

nosebleeds, and eye irritation among salon professionals, many of whom—particularly Black and Latina women—experience daily exposure to these chemicals.[1] The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reaffirmed these risks in its January 2025 risk evaluation under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).[2] Adverse reactions reported to the FDA through the CAERS database indicate that users of hair straighteners continue to be harmed today. Given these longstanding warnings, now is the time to take meaningful action.[3]

Commissioner Makary, you have an opportunity to reverse years of inaction and prioritize public health by implementing the formaldehyde ban without further delay. Science is clear, the health risks are undeniable, and the growing state-level momentum underscores the urgency of your leadership in this moment. Releasing the proposed rule within your first 90 days in the office would send a powerful message that the FDA is committed to protecting public health, particularly for the salon workers and consumers who have been harmed for far too long.

We, the undersigned organizations, call on you to act decisively and release the proposed final rulemaking for the formaldehyde ban by July 10, 2025 without delay, without exceptions, and without compromise. The health of millions of consumers and workers depends on it.

Sincerely,

Women's Voices for the Earth
Black Women for Wellness Action Project
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative
Center for Environmental Health
CleanEarth4Kids.org
Clearya
Collaborative for Health & Environment (CHE)
Community Collaboration on Climate Change
Comunidades Aliadas Tomando Accion
Consumer Reports
Heal by Dawn
Defend Our Health

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[1] https://www.osha.gov/hair-salons

[2] https://www.epa.gov/chemicals-under-tsca/epa-finalizes-tsca-risk-evaluation-formaldehyde

[3] https://www.fda.gov/food/compliance-enforcement-food/cfsan-adverse-event-reporting-system-caers

Defend Them All
Environmental Justice Health Alliance for Chemical Policy Reform (EJHA)
Environmental Working Group
FACTS Families Advocating for Chemical and Toxics Safety
Families Advocating for Chemical and Toxics Safety
Friends of the Earth
Girl Plus Environment
Green Science Policy Institute
Habitable
Innersense Organic Beauty
Keep A Breast
Long Beach Gray Panthers
Los Jardines Institute
Maternal and Child Health Access
Moms Advocating Sustainability
Moms for a Nontoxic New York (MNNY)
My Style Matters, Inc.
NAACP Greater Grand Rapids
New York Committee for Occupational Safety and Health
Non-Toxic Neighborhoods
Our Green Challenge
Récolte Energy
RiSE for Environmental Health & Justice
SafetyNest
The Coming Clean Network
Toxic-Free Future
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
WIlderness Within
Women for a Healthy Environment