

**Testimony of Tanya Khemet Taiwo, PhD, MPH
Assembly ESTM Committee -- May 14, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairman, Committee members.

My name is Dr. Taiwo and I am an epidemiologist with the [UC Davis Environmental Health Sciences Center](#).

The science is undisputed as to the harm to human health caused by the 12 chemicals banned by AB2762 including: cancer, birth defects, damage to the reproductive system, organ system toxicity and endocrine disruption. Ten of the 12 chemicals banned by AB2762 are directly linked to breast cancer and 9 are linked to a compromised immune system which can increase susceptibility and slow recovery from COVID-19. All of which are currently banned from cosmetic products sold in the European Union.

Despite claims that a little bit of a toxic chemical in a consumer product isn't cause for concern, the evidence shows that even small exposures can cause harm for developing fetuses, infants and children. None of us live in a bubble, we are exposed to toxic chemicals daily, and cumulative exposures increase risk of harm.

Evidence is emerging that people most affected by toxic chemical exposures are also more vulnerable to COVID-19, in susceptibility and in recovery. Importantly, 9 of the 12 chemicals banned by this bill are linked to disruption in immune system function, which can result in inflammation. And chronic inflammation increases the body's response to attacks on the immune system.

Here is a little of what we know about some of these toxic chemicals. Studies suggest a connection between PFAS exposure, suppressed immune function, neurodevelopmental delay, and greater risk of autoimmune diseases.

Formaldehyde is a known human carcinogen. Mercury is linked to developmental and reproductive harm. Both negatively impact the immune system.

Phthalates are hormone disrupting compounds which impact the developing brain, and alters levels of cytokines, which are key players in the immune response to coronavirus

Parabens among other health impacts, affects our immune system's defenses against infections like COVID-19.

And who is affected most? Children, women of childbearing age and women of color.

Women of color are over-exposed to extremely toxic chemicals in the toxic products marketed to them. In fact, a recent study conducted by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences showed that black women who frequently dye their hair face a 60% increased risk of breast cancer, appalling because we already face the highest mortality rate from breast cancer of any U.S. racial or ethnic group.

One in eight women will experience breast cancer in her lifetime. This important bill takes us one step closer to preventing breast cancer by removing a major source of ongoing exposure to some of the most toxic substances on the planet.

As a scientist, a woman of color, and a mother of 3 daughters facing the statistical probability that our risk of breast cancer could be increased simply because of our personal care products, I am here to tell you that's simply not okay.

Safer alternatives to these chemicals exist, and the companies selling these toxic products here in the U.S. are selling the same products without these toxic chemicals in Europe.

In this time of COVID-19, life has been turned upside down, the one thing I know for certain is that we all need to do everything in our power to prevent this disease from causing even more harm. I urge you to support AB2762. Thank you!

Sources:

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EHN: How toxic chemicals contribute to COVID-19 deaths: Frederick vom Saal, Aly Cohen
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