

# Strongest law in the U.S. regulating toxic chemicals in cosmetics signed by Washington State Governor today

*Washington's Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act bans more chemicals of concern in beauty and personal care products than any other state or federal law.*

OLYMPIA, WA, USA, May 16, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Today, the [Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act \(HB 1047\)](#)—sponsored by Washington State Representative Sharlett Mena (29th Legislative District)—was [signed by Governor Inslee](#), making it the strongest law in the nation regulating cosmetics and personal care products.



“You shouldn’t have to be a toxicologist to shop for personal care products. When products are on the shelf, we assume they are safe to use, but this is not always the case. In fact, Ecology found that many cosmetics contain toxic chemicals and that those with the highest concentrations are often marketed to women of color,” said Washington State Representative Sharlett Mena (D-Tacoma). “We regulate the use of toxics in other products, but the law allowed products that we apply to our bodies to use harmful chemicals. With this new law, we will no longer allow these harmful chemicals to be added to personal care products and sold to unsuspecting people.”

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*Laurie Valeriano, executive director, Toxic-Free Future*

Washington continues its leadership to regulate dangerous chemicals in everyday products and begins to address the disproportionate impact to people of color with this new law. It bans PFAS, lead, phthalates, formaldehyde and formaldehyde releasers, and other harmful chemicals; requires assessment of chemicals that can impact vulnerable populations; and, creates incentives for safer products. Bans take effect in 2025, except for formaldehyde releasers that have a phased-in approach beginning in 2026.

“Today we celebrate a big win for public health,” said Laurie Valeriano, executive director, Toxic-Free Future. “Products we put on our bodies should only be made with the safest ingredients. Thanks to the leadership by our state legislature and Governor, cosmetics will be free of known harmful chemicals like PFAS, lead and formaldehyde and the transition to safer cosmetics and personal care products will be supported. The entire nation will benefit from a cleaner supply chain and information on safer alternatives.”

This is the first state law on cosmetics and personal care products to:

- Ban the class of ortho-phthalates, all formaldehyde-releasing agents, and triclosan;
- Restrict lead;
- Require state agencies to assess the hazards of chemicals used in products that can impact vulnerable populations; and,
- Provide support for small businesses and independent cosmetologists to transition to safer products.

“This is a huge step in the right direction for making professional products safer for beauty industry professionals, as well as safer personal care products at the consumer level,” said Merideth Pedack, cosmetologist for 28 years.

Studies have shown that women of color are disproportionately exposed to harmful chemicals in cosmetics. A 2022 study found an increased risk of uterine cancer in women who used hair straightening products, which often contain the known human carcinogen formaldehyde. In January, the Washington State Departments of Ecology and Health issued a report that found high levels of formaldehyde in certain hair products, creams, and lotions marketed to or used by people of color.

“This bill will help secure environmental justice and improve the health of girls and women of color across the state,” said Dr. Ami Zota, tenured Associate Professor of environmental health sciences at Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health.

“This bill will help ensure that young children and adolescents can use common cosmetics without enduring harmful environmental exposures,” said Dr. Sheela Sathyanarayana, University of Washington/Seattle Children’s Research Institute. “This is important because these children are still growing and developing, and exposures at this age can have lasting impacts into the future.”

Washington State's action builds on other state laws in six states (CA, NY, MD, MN, ME and CO) that have also stepped up to regulate harmful chemicals in cosmetics and personal care products in the absence of strong federal protections. A chart comparing state laws regulating toxic chemicals in cosmetics and personal care products can be found here:

<https://toxicfreefuture.org/washington-state/campaign-2023-washington-state-cosmetics-bill/?section=resources>

“This law shows that states have a key role to play – they are in a position to be part of the solution as well as to fill the gaps that the federal government has left when it comes to toxic-free beauty products,” said Sarah Doll, national director of Safer States. “State laws like these are a giant step forward for safer cosmetics nationwide.”

Many companies have demonstrated that banning hazardous chemicals is good business. Retailers including Credo Beauty, CVS Health, Rite Aid, Sephora, Target, Ulta Beauty, Walgreens, Walmart, and Whole Foods Market have been working to reduce and eliminate harmful chemicals for many years as documented by Toxic-Free Future’s Mind the Store program.

“This common-sense law supports a growing trend in the retail sector to restrict dangerous chemicals in cosmetics,” said Mike Schade, director of Mind the Store, a program of Toxic-Free Future. “Banning chemicals like lead and formaldehyde that we know are harmful levels the playing field and ensures companies are making safer products.”

Opposition to this legislation included the Personal Care Products Council, L’Oreal, Shiseido, Unilever, among others. These groups requested a veto of the bill, citing concerns especially around banning lead, for which experts widely agree there is no safe level, as well as formaldehyde-releasing agents, chemicals that emit formaldehyde over time, despite the widespread availability and use of safer alternatives.

Clean beauty company, Beautycounter, testified and supported the bill. “We are inspired by this milestone and our community’s advocacy work to get safer products into the hands of everyone,” said Jen Lee, Chief Impact Officer, Beautycounter.

Toxic-Free Future thanks Representative Mena for championing the bill; Reps. Doglio, Fitzgibbon, and Senators Nguyen, Trudeau, Rolfes and Saldaña for their leadership; former Senator Das for bringing this important issue forward in 2021; and Governor Inslee for signing this important measure.

For additional expert quotes: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/washington-state/campaign-2023-washington-state-cosmetics-bill/additional-quotes/>

For more information on the Toxic-Free Cosmetics Act: <https://toxicfreefuture.org/2023-washington-state-cosmetics-bill/>

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