

Baby Food Companies Demand \$600,000 From Autistic Boy

Beech-Nut, Earth's Best, Walmart and others say they are owed the money for court fees

LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATE, February 13, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Most of the nation's largest baby food makers are demanding that a nine-year-old autistic boy pay them \$600,000 in court costs they allege they incurred in a lawsuit over products containing toxic lead, arsenic and mercury.

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Six of the largest baby food manufacturers in the world, who claim to focus on the health and well-being of our children, seek to make an example of a nine-year-old boy with autism...”

*Pedram Esfandiary, partner at
Wisner Baum*

The multinational corporations behind Beech-Nut (Hero Group), Earth's Best (Hain Celestial) and Sprout Organics (Neptune Wellness), along with Walmart (Parent's Choice), Nurture (Happy Family) and Plum Organics will ask a Los Angeles Superior Court judge on Wednesday to order the Temecula, Calif., boy — 4th-grader Noah Cantabrana — to pony up more than half a million dollars after his lawsuit against the companies was dismissed on a very technical

legal issue.

“Six of the largest baby food manufacturers in the world, who claim to focus on the health and well-being of our children, seek to make an example of a nine-year-old boy with autism for daring to sue them,” said Noah's attorney, [Pedram Esfandiary](#), a partner of Los Angeles-based Wisner Baum. “The companies' sole purpose in seeking such an obscene cost is a twisted desire to punish Noah.

“They want to financially cripple him for the rest of his life. Noah and his family – like most American families – do not have this kind money,” [Esfandiary added](#). “Because of his autism and ADHD, which the lawsuit alleged was caused by his exposure to toxic heavy metals in their baby food products, Noah already faces many obstacles that he will continue to deal with as he grows older.”

Nestlé-owned Gerber, which was also named in the lawsuit, is the only corporation not seeking money from the autistic boy.

The lawsuit was filed in September 2021 on Noah's behalf against seven of the world's largest baby food companies after the U.S. House Committee on Oversight and Reform's Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy released a shocking report on toxic metals in baby food. The report, titled 'Baby Foods Are Tainted with Dangerous Levels of Arsenic, Lead, Cadmium, and Mercury,' found dangerously high levels of heavy metals in many of the leading baby food brands. Noah's complaint accused the companies of knowingly making and selling baby and toddler foods containing significant levels of toxic heavy metals.

A Los Angeles Superior Court judge in 2022 allowed Noah's case to go forward, ruling that Plaintiff's experts' opinions that heavy metals are capable of being a substantial factor in causing ASD and ADHD are admissible.

And another judge in September 2023 held that Noah's experts' opinions that exposure to heavy metals can cause autism and ADHD rested on sound science, but dismissed the case on a technicality. The judge made the decision, following a hearing in which he rejected crucial expert witness testimony calculating the dose of heavy metals ingested through baby food, preventing Noah's case from being heard by a jury.

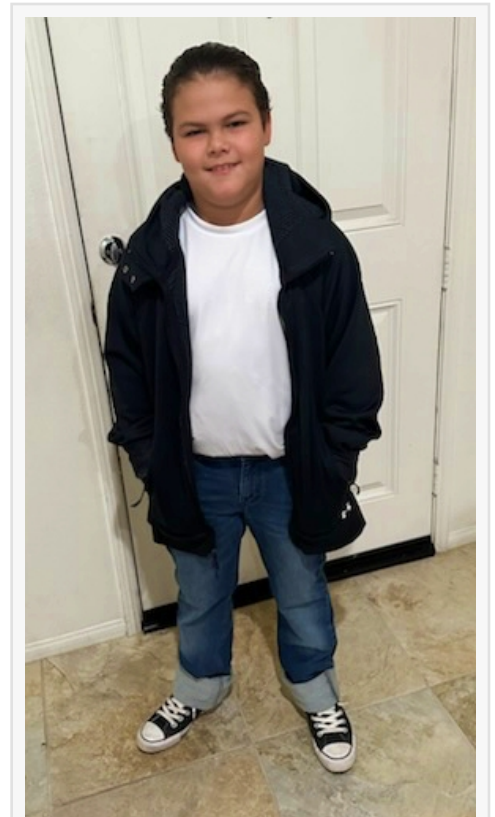
The ruling does not prevent future baby food cases from going forward.

Lead toxicity is known to cause lifelong neurological damage and is consistently linked to autism and ADHD in children. Toxin levels build up in a toddler's rapidly-developing body with every jar, cup or pouch of contaminated food they ingest.

Yet, due to a lack of federal regulations, manufacturers are allowed to police themselves, though they often claim they regularly test foods, deeming them safe for babies and toddlers to consume, Esfandiary said.

"The recent WanaBana cinnamon applesauce case so far has resulted in more than 400 children in 43 states with lead poisoning or who are likely to be diagnosed with it. This is what happens when we let baby food companies police themselves," Esfandiary said. Wisner Baum represents more than 3,500 families that claim [heavy metals in baby food caused a brain injury that manifests as autism](#).

Meanwhile, Noah remains focused on what he loves best: Going to the snow or to the beach, molding clay figures of his favorite gaming characters, playing with his brother and snuggling with the family dog and cats.



4th-grader Noah Cantabrana

“These companies keep declaring to the world how concerned they are with the well-being of the next generation,” Esfandiary said. “Yet here they are, trying to place an insurmountable hurdle in Noah’s path even before he’s had the chance to enter the workforce. That should tell anyone how much they really care.”

The lawsuit was filed in Los Angeles County Superior Court; N.C., a minor, v. Hain Celestial Group, Inc., Beech-Nut Nutrition Company, Nurture, Inc., et al.; Case No. 21STCV22822 (Sept. 7, 2021).

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Wisner Baum represents over 18,000 plaintiffs in a broad range of civil litigation and has won more than \$4 billion across all practice areas, including class action litigation, mass torts, aviation accidents, commercial transportation cases, pharmaceutical product liability, and more. The firm has earned a reputation for breaking new legal ground, holding major corporations accountable, influencing public policy, and raising public awareness about important safety issues.

Robert Frank
Newsroom Public Relations
206-790-6324

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