



April 28, 2015

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Health

FROM: Committee Majority Staff

RE: Hearing entitled “Examining Microbeads in Cosmetic Products”

I. INTRODUCTION

On May 1, 2015, at 9:15 a.m. in 2123 Rayburn House Office Building, the Subcommittee on Health will hold a hearing entitled “Examining Microbeads in Cosmetic Products.” The hearing will examine H.R. 1321, Microbeads-Free Waters Act of 2015, authored by Ranking Member Frank Pallone (D-NJ) and cosponsored by Chairman Fred Upton (R-MI).

II. WITNESSES

- Mr. Dan Wyant, Director, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality;
- Senator Linda R. Greenstein, New Jersey Legislature;
- Ms. Molly Flanagan, Alliance for the Great Lakes; and,
- Mr. John Hurson, Executive Vice President of Government Relations, Personal Care Products Council.

III. BACKGROUND

Microbeads, also known as, “polyethylene” or “polypropylene,” are synthetic plastic particles that are commonly used as an abrasive in many personal-care products, such as face wash, body wash, soaps, shampoos, and toothpaste. Microbeads are too small to be filtered out by most sewer treatment facilities and make their way into our waterways and wildlife. Microbeads can absorb chemicals commonly found in waters and become large enough that they are mistaken for food by small fish and wildlife.

Many manufacturers are phasing out the use of microbeads in their personal care products voluntarily because of the environmental impact of the microbeads. Further, States are moving toward prohibiting the use of microbeads in personal care products. Specifically, five states have enacted such microbeads legislation and two more have bills headed to their governors for signature. Additionally, fifteen States are considering or have pending microbeads legislation.

H.R. 1321, Microbeads-Free Waters Act of 2015, would require the Food and Drug Administration prohibit the sale or distribution of personal care products containing microbeads by January 1, 2018. This legislation would establish a national standard to protect the environment and ensure that manufacturers do not face a patchwork of State laws.

IV. STAFF CONTACTS

If you have any questions regarding this hearing, please contact Carly McWilliams of the Committee staff at (202) 225-2927.