



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Passes Legislation Prohibiting Harmful Levels of Toxics in Children's Jewelry

DEAN G. SKELOS March 6, 2012

The New York State Senate today passed a measure that would prohibit the sale of children's jewelry which may contain harmful levels of cadmium and other hazardous substances. The bill (S.4055A), sponsored by Senator Jim Alesi (R-C-I, Perinton) protects children from accidentally ingesting cadmium, often used in inexpensive charm bracelets, pendants and other jewelry.

"It is everyone's responsibility to protect our children, especially from products containing hazardous substances," said Senator Alesi. "This bill takes an important step to prevent the sale of items that could cause accidental and unnecessary exposure and severe health effects."

Cadmium is a known carcinogen, which can hinder brain development in children and cause kidney, lung and intestinal damage. A 2009 report by the Associated Press (AP) found that Chinese manufacturers have been substituting cadmium for lead to make inexpensive jewelry which is then being sold by retailers in New York and other states. While lead is toxic to children at high exposure, cadmium has been linked to potential health issues at lower exposures.

Children can be exposed to cadmium by accidentally swallowing a piece of jewelry or by putting it in their mouth. When the jewelry becomes bitten, scratched, or damaged - which is likely with continued use by young children - exposure risk increases.

“The best way to safeguard our children from exposure to harmful items is to prevent them from getting access in the first place,” Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said.

“Prohibiting the use of toxic levels of cadmium and other metals in the manufacturing of children’s jewelry eliminates a known risk so that our families can grow up healthy.”

A 2011 study published in the Environmental Health Perspectives journal and tests conducted by the AP found that some jewelry would potentially expose children to 100 times the recommended cadmium limit if swallowed, and some contained so much cadmium that if they had been different items, and not children’s jewelry, they would have fallen under federal environmental laws for specific handling and disposal.

Cadmium is not currently a federally regulated substance in toys or jewelry, though health and consumer protection agencies have issued guidelines and recommendations on safe levels of the metal.

This legislation restricts the use of cadmium and other hazardous substances in children’s jewelry, including in paint and surface coatings.

The bill will be sent to the Assembly.