California AB 1989 Will Allow Manufacturers of Period Care Products to Continue to Hide Ingredients

National environmental health organization, Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE), announced their opposition to California bill AB 1989, stating that it is not enough to protect the health of people who menstruate from hidden ingredients found in period care products by allowing companies to continue to keep ingredient secrets via claims of confidential business information.

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (PRWEB) January 31, 2020 -- National environmental health organization, Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE), announced their opposition to California bill AB 1989, stating that it is not enough to protect the health of people who menstruate from hidden ingredients found in period products. Introduced by Assembly Member Cristina Garcia, AB 1989 requires the disclosure of some ingredients in tampons, pads, menstrual cup and underwear, but also allows manufacturers to hide certain ingredients as confidential business information (CBI).

“Allowing companies to claim CBI is an immediate red flag when it comes to the safety of period care products. These products have been woefully under-regulated and under-researched for decades and there is so much we don’t know about their manufacturing, ingredients and potential health impacts,” said Alexandra Scranton, Director of Science and Research at Women’s Voices for the Earth. “Allowing some ingredients to be hidden as CBI will hamper the progress of needed research, and will not give people who menstruate, advocates, or researchers a full picture of the ingredients used in these products.”

Recent testing of menstrual products around the world has detected numerous chemicals of concern that were never before known to be associated with these products.[1] This testing was commonly instigated in response to reports of adverse health effects associated with the use of menstrual products (such as rashes, chemical burns, asthma attacks and more) which are largely unexplained. The chemical exposure routes from menstrual products are unique as these products are inserted into the body or touch highly absorbent vaginal and vulvar tissue. There is particular concern that vaginal exposure to chemicals may have different and unexpected impacts on the body than dermal skin exposure, particularly affecting the reproductive system.

“For example, there is little we know about the health impacts of the chemicals used in the superabsorbent polymers that absorb menstrual fluid, or about the plasticizers and fragrance chemicals used in scented tampons and pads,” said Scranton. “Under AB 1989 companies can continue to hide a number of the chemicals that make up these components, simply by claiming they are confidential.”

Menstrual products like tampons, pads, and menstrual cups are regulated by the FDA as medical devices. The FDA does not require the disclosure of ingredients in these products, and language/design of menstrual product labels are not required to get pre-market approval from the FDA.

In October 2019 New York Governor Andrew Cuomo signed into law A.164B (introduced by Linda B. Rosenthal) making New York the first state in the nation to require disclosure of all intentionally-added ingredients in menstrual products on the label. Notably, and in direct contrast to AB 1989, the bill does not allow manufacturers to hide ingredients from their customers by deeming them as CBI.
“In short, AB 1989 is a step backward for ingredient disclosure of menstrual products,” said Jamie McConnell, Director of Programs and Policy at Women’s Voices for the Earth. “The New York bill has set a new precedent for ingredient transparency of period care products and people in California should have the right to the same information. It’s a disservice to Californians to propose a bill that is weaker than is what is already required by law in another state.”

AB 1989 was introduced as part of Assemblymember Garcia’s “Menstrual Equity Bill Package” which also includes bills to eliminate the “tampon tax” in California and increase accessibility of menstrual products in community colleges.

“We applaud and support Assemblymember Garcia’s commitment to menstrual equity and for ensuring period health is a priority for Californians – unfortunately in its current form AB 1989 is a step backward in important ingredient disclosure information,” said McConnell. "Menstrual equity means equal access to information, no matter what state you live in."

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About WVE
Launched 2012 with the report Chem Fatale, Women’s Voices for the Earth (WVE) has been leading an active campaign in ingredient disclosure and chemical safety of menstrual care products, which has helped uplift the issue of period health into the public mainstream. In 2015, their Detox the Box campaign moved two of the world’s largest period care products manufacturers — Procter and Gamble and Kimberly Clark — to start disclosing ingredients in pads and tampons. WVE’s advocacy work helped pass New York’s A.164B, the nation’s first period product ingredient disclosure bill into law.

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