



DEPARTMENT OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
KA 'OIHANA O KA LOIO KUHINA

JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA

ANNE LOPEZ
ATTORNEY GENERAL
LOIO KUHINA

News Release 2024-10

**ATTORNEY GENERAL LOPEZ CALLS ON FDA TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM
LEAD AND OTHER TOXIC METALS IN BABY FOOD**

*Nearly 400 Recent Nationwide Lead Poisoning Cases Connected to Recalled
Cinnamon Applesauce Pouches Highlight Urgent Need for Stronger Protections*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 15, 2024

HONOLULU – Hawai'i Attorney General Anne Lopez today joined a coalition of 20 attorneys general calling on the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take urgent action to protect babies and young children nationwide from lead and other toxic metals in baby food.

In a letter sent today, Attorney General Lopez and the coalition urged the FDA to act on an October 2021 petition and subsequent June 2022 petition and letter, which asked the FDA to issue specific guidance to the baby food industry to require testing of all finished food products for lead and other toxic metals. The coalition emphasizes the critical need for the FDA to act, citing recent findings of hundreds of childhood lead poisoning cases linked to recalled cinnamon applesauce pouches that were sold in stores throughout the country, without first being tested for toxic metals.

“The recent nationwide recall of lead-contaminated apple sauce is a reminder that our food security in Hawai'i is dependent not only on increased local production, but also on robust federal regulation that promotes good manufacturing practices and accountability,” said Deputy Attorney General Wade Hargrove of the department's Health Division. “This petition calls on the FDA to better regulate baby food by mandating finished product testing to prevent our most vulnerable population from being exposed to toxic chemicals in the very foods that are often touted as essential for good health.”

Despite the agency concluding years ago that babies' and young children's smaller bodies and metabolisms make them more susceptible to the harmful effects of toxic metals, the FDA has established only one action level for one type of toxic metal (inorganic arsenic) in one type of baby food product (infant rice cereal) to date. Under current FDA policy, baby food manufacturers are left to decide whether or not to even test their products for toxic metals and other contaminants.

In April 2021, the FDA announced the “Closer to Zero” plan, under which the agency committed to proposing “action levels” for lead in various baby foods by April 2022, inorganic arsenic in various baby foods by April 2024, and cadmium and mercury sometime after April 2024. FDA has since removed those deadlines from its Closer to Zero website. In October 2021, Attorney General Lopez joined a coalition of 23 attorneys general in filing a petition with the FDA, urging the agency to issue clear industry guidance on testing for lead and other toxic metals in finished baby and toddler food products. After the FDA denied the 2021 petition, Attorney General Lopez and the coalition sought reconsideration of the decision in June 2022. The letter sent today renews the call for FDA to take urgent action to protect families from lead and other toxic metals in baby food products.

In the letter, Attorney General Lopez and the coalition highlight recent widespread childhood lead poisonings related to high levels of lead detected in WanaBana, Schnucks, and Weis brand cinnamon applesauce pouches, that were not tested for toxic metals and have since been recalled. The now-recalled WanaBana pouches were sold in online outlets such as Amazon and through multiple retailers, including Sam’s Club and Dollar Tree stores throughout the country. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified nearly 400 confirmed or probable childhood lead poisoning cases nationwide in connection with consumption of these cinnamon applesauce pouches.



Consumers who have purchased these recalled products and may still have them in their homes should not feed them to children or anyone else. Instead, these products should be safely discarded by carefully opening each pouch and emptying the contents into the garbage to prevent others from possibly salvaging and consuming the recalled products. For more information on these recalled products, consult [FDA](https://www.fda.gov).

Joining Attorney General Lopez in sending this letter to FDA are the attorneys general of New York, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

A copy of the letter can be found [here](#).

###

Media Contacts:

Dave Day
Special Assistant to the Attorney General
Office: 808-586-1284
Email: david.d.day@hawaii.gov
Web: <http://ag.hawaii.gov>

Toni Schwartz
Public Information Officer
Hawai'i Department of the Attorney General
Office: 808-586-1252
Cell: 808-379-9249
Email: Toni.E.Schwartz@hawaii.gov
Web: <http://ag.hawaii.gov>