

Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor
State of California
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Sacramento, CA 95814

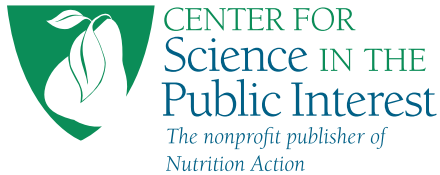
Re: AB 418 & AB 899 Signature Request

Dear Governor Newsom:

The Center for Science in the Public Interest is writing to urge you to sign two important bills—AB 418 (California Food Safety Act) and AB 899—that would greatly improve the safety of foods sold in California and provide necessary protections to one of the state's most vulnerable populations, children.

The California Food Safety Act, AB 418, prohibits companies from adding to food four chemicals that are linked to cancer, reproductive harm, and other serious adverse health effects. These chemicals—Red 3, potassium bromate, brominated vegetable oil (BVO), and propylparaben—are presently found in thousands of foods, including many candies and other products marketed to children. All four are already banned for almost all food uses in the European Union. Unfortunately, due to ongoing failures by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), they are still allowed in foods in the U.S. In the case of Red 3, FDA itself determined in 1990 that the dye causes cancer when eaten. The agency then banned the use of Red 3 in cosmetics and topical drugs but never banned it in food. Since then, 33 years have elapsed, and generations of children have been unnecessarily exposed to this cancer-causing food dye. In 2021, California's Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment confirmed that Red 3 and other synthetic dyes cause neurobehavioral problems, such as inattention and hyperactivity, in some children. Since then, no regulatory action has been taken to protect California's children from Red 3 or other synthetic dyes. By signing AB 418, you will ensure that Californians will no longer suffer the negative impacts of Red 3 and three other harmful food chemicals.

AB 899 mandates that baby food manufacturers who sell or distribute their products in California routinely test their products for lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury—toxic elements that cause permanent brain damage, cancer, and other serious harm—and make the results of those tests available to the state and the public. Two 2021 Congressional reports revealed that, per testing conducted by major baby food manufacturers, baby foods sold in the U.S. can contain concerning levels of these toxic elements. These revelations led the FDA to establish its Closer to Zero program aimed at reducing the levels of toxic elements in foods consumed by children, but progress has been frustratingly slow, with the agency missing its first self-imposed deadlines. Under current federal and state law, baby food manufacturers are under no obligation to test



their products for toxic elements, and when they do test their products, they are not required to share the results with federal or state authorities or the public. The lack of oversight and transparency undermines public trust and imperils the health of our children. By signing AB 899, you will guarantee that state regulators and parents alike have the information they need to protect California's babies from the lifelong harm caused by exposure to toxic elements in baby food.

Federal agencies are consistently failing to act to protect us from the harmful chemicals in our foods. Please sign AB 418 and AB 899 into law and give Californians the protections they deserve. In so doing, you will establish California as a national pioneer to protecting children.

Sincerely,

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