

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2019

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Admiral Brett Giroir, MD
Acting Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Acting Commissioner Giroir:

We write today to express our concern about the safety of baby and toddler food in the United States. The problem of heavy metals in baby food is not new. Numerous studies over the past decade have highlighted the prevalence of these substances in baby food, and examined how exposure to these substances can increase certain health risks. However, we are particularly concerned with a new report that found 95 percent of baby food tested had toxic heavy metals—including lead, arsenic, cadmium, and mercury. Furthermore, the report by Healthy Babies Bright Futures, found that one in four baby foods contained all four of these toxic metals. Given the seriousness of these findings and the health risks they pose, we urge the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take immediate action to ensure the safety of our nation's baby and toddler food.

Parents deserve to have peace of mind that the baby and toddler food they purchase is safe and nutritious. Reports that many types of commonly sold baby and toddler food products may contain trace elements of harmful metals are deeply concerning. Developing babies and children are particularly vulnerable to toxic exposure. In regard to lead exposure, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has made clear that there is no safe blood lead level in children, and even low levels of lead in a child's blood could negatively impact IQ, ability to pay attention, and academic achievement. A new study completed by a toxicology and economic research firm estimated that lead and arsenic in rice-based baby foods account for one-fifth of the more than 11 million IQ points children lose from birth to 24 months of age from all dietary sources.


The FDA is responsible for protecting public health by ensuring our food is safe to consume. This is particularly important and urgent when it comes to the products parents feed their infants, babies, toddlers and children. We are concerned about the health threat these contaminated products pose to children, and the effects of their harmful exposure over time.


Accordingly, we request the FDA provide us with a detailed update on its efforts to prevent and reduce the presence of heavy metals and other contaminants in baby and toddler food products being sold in the United States. This update should include detailed information

demonstrating how the FDA is using specific metrics and benchmarks to measure progress towards reducing, and ultimately eliminating, harmful substances in baby foods. Finally, if there are specific actions Congress could take to strengthen the FDA's ability to safeguard these foods products, we would welcome the agency's recommendations.


Thank you in advance for considering our request and we look forward to reviewing your prompt response.


Sincerely,


Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Cory A. Booker
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Jacky Rosen
United States Senator