

April 21, 2025

Thank you to the Agriculture, Veterans, Broadband and Rural Development Committee for the opportunity to provide my testimony. My name is Zeke McKinney, and I am an occupational and environmental medicine physician at HealthPartners and an Affiliate Assistant Professor at the University of Minnesota School of Public Health. My specialty of occupational and environmental medicine is all about environmental hazards, and my clinical practice focuses on environmental exposures in all kinds of settings.

I support Senate File 188, requiring the testing of phthalates in packaged food products in Minnesota. Because of their prolific use in plastic manufacturing and the wide-ranging use of plastics, phthalates are more or less ubiquitous in the environment, in animals, and most notably, in human beings.

Evidence of this fact has been demonstrated continually in studies looking for these chemicals in blood, urine, amniotic fluid, semen, and breast milk. Even though phthalates will leave our bodies in less than 24 hours (without further exposure), the fact that these compounds are always found in human studies suggests continuous exposures.

Research has shown very strong associations between phthalate exposures and human health outcomes including reproductive hazards, such as sperm quality, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Additional associations have been made between phthalate exposures and heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, and kidney disease.

More broadly, phthalates also cause changes in various hormone systems (because these chemicals are very similar in shape to human hormones, so can interact with systems in our bodies) and changes in the activation or inactivation of genes, both of which can lead to cancer.

As with most human health hazards, children are at the most risk, with the various systems affected still developing in their bodies. For this reason, we must protect Minnesotans from some of the direct exposures to phthalates, including removing them from our food sources, and this bill to support testing for these compounds, already known to be present in many of our foods, is the first step in that process. Therefore, I ask for your support of Senate File 188 to require testing of phthalates in packaged food products.

Thank you,

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