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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Attorney General Kaul Calls on FDA to Protect Children from
Lead and Other Toxic Metals in Baby Food**

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

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul 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, AG Kaul and the coalition urged FDA to act on the their [October 2021 petition](#) and subsequent [June 2022 petition and letter](#), which asked 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 FDA to act, citing recent findings of hundreds of childhood lead poisoning linked to recalled cinnamon applesauce pouches that were sold in stores throughout the country without first being tested for toxic metals.

“We must have clear standards to protect babies and children from ingesting toxic heavy metals in their food,” said Attorney General Kaul. “Metals such as lead pose a threat tied to numerous adverse health effects. Inaction by the FDA is unacceptable.”

Despite the agency concluding years ago that babies' and young children's smaller bodies and metabolisms make them more vulnerable to the harmful effects of toxic metals, 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.

This delay in FDA action is both a public health concern and a matter of environmental justice, as children from low-income communities and communities of color are disproportionately impacted by lead through exposure to lead-based paint, lead in drinking water pipes and other sources. Lead in their food only exacerbates the existing inordinate and inequitable hazards these children face.

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. The FDA has since removed those deadlines from its Closer to Zero website. In October 2021, Attorney General Kaul [joined a coalition of 23 attorneys general in filing a petition with 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 FDA denied the 2021 petition, Attorney General Kaul 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 Kaul 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. These were not tested for toxic metals and have since been recalled. The now-recalled WanaBana pouches were sold in Dollar Tree stores throughout the country. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has identified nearly 400 confirmed or probable childhood lead poisoning cases in connection to 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 the [FDA](#).

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