

HUNTINGTON

After 10 Years, Advocates Cheer Child Safety Law

By Peter Sloggatt

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Hey, it just may be safe to be a kid again. The governor last week signed into law the Child Safe Products Act (S.501-B Kaminsky / A. 6296-A Englebright) which will require manufacturers to disclose harmful chemicals contained in children's products and restrict the most toxic.

The bill was signed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo somewhat unceremoniously late last Friday, Feb. 7. But its enactment into law was a big deal for the folks at a couple of Huntington-based, health non-profits. Karen Miller, best known as president of Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, launched the Prevention is the Cure campaign to educate consumers, particularly children, about how to live a healthy lifestyle to prevent catastrophic diseases. Beth Fiteni is director of Green Inside and Out, an advocacy organization that educates people on how the impact their daily choices have on their own health as well as the environment. Both women have been involved in a decade-long campaign to get the Child Safe Products Act passed and signed into law.

Miller and Fiteni were in fact part of a diverse coalition of advocates pushing for passage of the bill. It included environmental health advocates, health-impacted groups, sustainable businesses, environmental justice leaders, health care providers, child care providers, parent groups and others, according to Fiteni.

With the governor's signature on the bill, state law will now require manufacturers to disclose "chemicals of concern" in children's products and restrict the most toxic. It also authorizes the state to add chemicals to the lists through regulation, rather than requiring an act of the legislature.

The bill passed the Senate and the Assembly nearly a year ago on Earth Day, 2019.



Huntington health advocates Karen Miller, left, and Beth Fiteni, right, are celebrating success after a decade-long effort to get child product safety laws put on the books.

Fiteni said the signing was delayed by negotiations to refine the law which resulted in the creation of a Children's Product Safety Council to advise the Department of Environmental Conservation on which "high priority" chemicals to restrict, and the scope of those restrictions, Fiteni said.

Both women cheered the bill as a victory for those most susceptible to the effects of harmful chemicals: children.

"While toxic chemicals can affect anyone, babies and children are particularly vulnerable to their impacts," Fiteni said. "Chemicals can alter childhood development, and can contribute to cancer, asthma, infertility, developmental disabilities, allergies, diabetes and more."

Under the new law, manufacturers must report the presence of such chemicals as benzene, chlorinated tris, and asbestos, and phase out the most toxic. New York State is among the first states to take such action, joining Washington, Oregon, Vermont, and Maine.

"We've worked for over a decade to establish an infrastructure to make sure the problem of toxic chemicals in children's

products is resolved once and for all, and the Child Safe Products Act does just that," said Kathleen A. Curtis, LPN, executive director of Clean and Healthy New York and co-leader of the JustGreen Partnership.

The list of toxic chemicals found in children's toys, and products like shampoo, is surprising. And since most of what goes into a baby's hands often goes into their mouths, those substances pose even greater danger.

"Because children chew and otherwise destroy their toys, clothing and gear, they are at high risk of exposure to toxic chemicals in their products, including cadmium in toys, asbestos in talc, and formaldehyde in shampoo. They can ingest, inhale, and absorb these toxic chemicals," Phil Landrigan, MD, Director of the Program in Global Public Health and the Common Good at Boston College said. "As the federal government refuses to take action to protect children's health, New York continues to lead the way by enacting the Child Safe Products Act."

Minority communities are at even greater risk, according to Cecil Corbin-Mark, Deputy Director of WE ACT For Environ-

mental Justice and Co-Leader of the JustGreen Partnership.

"In the communities we work in, families don't have the time or finances to bypass all of the toxic products on store shelves. Communities of color are disproportionately harmed by toxic chemicals in products," Corbin-Mark said. "By signing the Child Safe Products Act, this Governor will ensure that all children have safe products, regardless of their zip code or parents' income."

Breast cancer advocacy pioneer Karen Miller has been in the fight from the beginning and greeted the enactment with enthusiasm.

"Keeping our children and grandchildren safe! Thanks Governor Cuomo. Thank you to NYS Assemblyman Steve Englebright and NYS Senator Todd Kaminsky for moving Child Safe Product through the Legislature. To all the health advocates who tirelessly built upon a foundation of facts we applaud you, to the moms, dads, and grandparents who shared their stories of caring for their child with chronic illness, we did this in your name," Miller said.

Beth Fiteni, Director of Green Inside and Out said, "It is one thing to say we want to protect our children, and another to do something about it. I am proud of New York State for taking a significant action to empower parents to protect their children from harmful chemicals in everyday products."

The Child Safe Products Act is the latest in a string of legislation designed to prevent unknown exposure to toxic chemicals. The governor has signed legislation banning PFAS in firefighting foam, requiring ingredient disclosures in period products, and banning 1,4-dioxane in cleaners, shampoo and body wash.

The measure was the flagship policy of the JustGreen Partnership, a coalition of more than 50 groups representing over a million New Yorkers working for environmental health and justice.

SUFFOLK COUNTY

Tech To Give County An Edge Over Scofflaws



A county contractor will be on the prowl for cars whose owners have unpaid traffic tickets. Those cars may be "booted" to motivate payments of those fines.

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Drivers who owe fines due to unpaid parking tickets or red light camera violations, be warned. The boot is coming.

Just in time for Valentine's Day, Suffolk County's Traffic and Parking Violations Agency will launch a new Boot and Tow program this Friday, Feb. 14.

That's the bad news. The good news is that the so-called "state-of-the-art public safety and enforcement program" is getting a "soft launch" that will target commercial vehicle violators. The program will be fully launched by June 1, 2020.

The other good news is that should your car be booted, it can be released remotely by

simply paying your fines via your smart phone.

TVB will rely on an outside firm to administer the program. New Jersey-based Paylock will use a mobile license plate recognition (MLPR) system and a remote-release SmartBoot that will enable the county to easily identify vehicles with unpaid fines and "improve customer service for those motorists whose vehicles are immobilized." In other words, if you do get booted you can have your car released instantly simply by paying the fines.

According to the traffic bureau there are currently nearly 50,000 vehicles considered eligible for boot and/or towing due to unpaid red light camera citations. In addition there are more than 58,000

unpaid parking tickets totaling more than \$30 million in unpaid fines and fees out there.

Motorists who find their car has been immobilized with a SmartBoot have the option to pay fines and penalties online. Once payment is authorized, Paylock will send a six-digit code directly to their phone that can be used to release the SmartBoot.

When the SmartBoot is placed on the vehicle, notices will also be placed on the driver side window and front windshield of the immobilized vehicle or vehicles listing a mobile web site and toll-free number that can be reached 24/7.

Motorists can pay unpaid parking and red-light camera fines online at Suffolkcounty.gov/tpva/Pay-Online.