

*Lawmakers query FDA after workers, customers report serious health impacts from exposure to formaldehyde in hair straightening product*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – Reps. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass), Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.), and Earl Blumenauer (D-Oreg.) today expressed serious concerns about the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) lack of progress investigating and taking action on the health impacts that result from the use of formaldehyde in hair straightening treatments, including "Brazilian Blowout." In a letter to FDA Commissioner Margaret Hamburg, the lawmakers state, "The FDA's inaction on this matter is putting the health of thousands of salon workers and consumers at risk of dangerous formaldehyde exposure from the continued use of not only Brazilian Blowout, but other hair straightening treatments that contain formaldehyde." Across the country, complaints have been reported by hair salon workers and customers of nose bleeds, breathing problems, vomiting, and hair loss associated with the use of hair straightening products such as Brazilian Blowout. Despite a warning from the FDA in August 2011, the makers of Brazilian Blowout have refused to reformulate their product to eliminate or even reduce the levels of formaldehyde. In January 2012, the California Attorney General's office reached a settlement with the makers of Brazilian Blowout that required the company to stop advertising as formaldehyde-free and to place warning stickers on the product.

"The FDA should not blow-off investigating the serious health impacts associated with Brazilian Blowout and other hair straighteners that contain toxic levels of formaldehyde," said Rep. Markey. "The FDA should immediately take action to stop the sale of these potentially carcinogenic hair straightening products and continue to evaluate whether to ban formaldehyde from hair straighteners altogether. Reps. Schakowsky and I introduced the Safe Cosmetics Act to help to protect American consumers from being exposed to dangerous and cancer-causing ingredients, and I will continue to work with my colleagues to move this important legislation forward."

"This letter calls for strong action to address dangerous formaldehyde-containing hair straightening treatments," said Rep. Schakowsky. "The health of salon workers and consumers depends on it. I introduced the Safe Cosmetics Act to provide the Food and Drug Administration with sufficient authority and resources to get dangerous cosmetic ingredients off the shelves. Along with Reps. Markey and Blumenauer, we will continue to push legislation forward. However, the FDA has not used their existing tools to remove adulterated and misbranded products from the market. The FDA must step up for consumers and get dangerous formaldehyde-containing products like Brazilian Blowout out of salons and off the shelves."

“The health hazard posed here is clear, and the practices that the makers of Brazilian Blowout continue to employ are grossly deceptive to businesses and consumers,” said Rep. Blumenauer. “People across the country depend on the FDA to protect them from such unscrupulous actors, and its inaction puts the health of thousands of people at unnecessary and completely avoidable risk.”

A copy of the letter to the FDA can be found [HERE](#) .

In the letter, the lawmakers request responses from the FDA to questions that include:

- What steps has the FDA taken to protect the public from Brazilian Blowout products that contain dangerous formaldehyde?
- Has the FDA initiated additional enforcement action against the makers of Brazilian Blowout?
- Is it the FDA's opinion that the makers of Brazilian Blowout have adequately addressed the violations noted in an August 2011 warning letter?
- What steps has FDA taken to look generally into hair straightening products on the market and conduct tests to determine whether other cosmetic manufacturers are producing products that may similarly contain dangerous levels of formaldehyde?
- What is the FDA's process for evaluating the safety of a cosmetic ingredient when it has already been deemed to be unsafe by the industry's ingredient review board?

In [May 2011](#) , Reps. Markey, Schakowsky, Blumenauer and seven other House Democrats called on the FDA to take immediate action after it was found that dangerous levels of formaldehyde were present in popular hair straightening beauty products and serious health impacts were reported by salon workers and customers following use of these products.