

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5609

As of February 12, 2015

Title: An act relating to protecting waterways from pollution from synthetic plastic microbeads.

Brief Description: Protecting waterways from pollution from synthetic plastic microbeads.

Sponsors: Senators Bailey, Ranker, Hatfield, Baumgartner, Lijas and Rolfs.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Energy, Environment & Telecommunications: 2/12/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Staff: Jan Odano (786-7486)

Background: There have been many scientific studies on the fate of microplastics in the marine environment showing that microplastic debris is widespread and has accumulated in the oceans and sediments worldwide. Microplastics have been observed in most marine habitats; all marine organism groups are at risk of interacting with this plastic debris. Because of the ubiquity of microplastics, these studies raise concerns about the consequences for the health of marine animals from ingestion of microplastics.

Microbeads are a microplastic comprised of synthetic spherical plastic particles used as an abrasive in many personal-care and beauty products, such as facial scrubs, soaps, and toothpastes. Microbeads are washed down the drain after use, escape water treatment plants because they are too small to filter, and are discharged into rivers, lakes, and oceans.

Other states have or are considering legislation to prohibit the manufacture and sale of products containing microbeads. Illinois enacted a ban that begins goes into effect 2018. New York, California, and Ohio are considering bans on microbeads in personal care products. Certain manufacturers of personal care products containing microbeads have committed to phase out plastic microbeads from their products.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sets labeling requirements for over-the counter drugs. The labels, in part, must include active ingredients, use, warnings and directions, as well as inactive ingredients.

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Summary of Bill: Beginning January 1, 2018, the manufacture of a personal care product containing synthetic microbeads is prohibited.

Beginning January 1, 2020, the sale and distribution of a personal care product or an over-the-counter drug containing synthetic microbeads, and the manufacture of such an over-the-counter drug, is prohibited.

Definitions include the following: synthetic plastic microbeads means a non-biodegradable solid plastic particle measuring less than 5 millimeters and used to exfoliate or cleanse; and an over-the-counter drug means a drug requiring specific labeling by the FDA.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.