File #: Res 0784-2025, **Version:** *

Res. No. 784

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.1797, to require that hair relaxer products display labels when they contain certain dangerous chemicals

By Council Members Williams, Joseph, Banks, Brooks-Powers, Ayala, Ossé, Gennaro, Hanks, Avilés, Louis, Feliz, Hanif, Narcisse and Hudson

Whereas, Hair relaxers, or hair straighteners, are cream or lotion based products with chemicals that can make curly hair straight or wavy; and

Whereas, According to a review from the journal *Cancer Medicine*, 94% of Black women under the age of 45 and 89% of Black women aged 45 and over reported using hair relaxer; and

Whereas, The organization Perception Institute reported that Black women were two times as likely as white women to "feel social pressure to straighten their hair for work"; and

Whereas, In a workplace research study prepared by Dove and the "Create a Respectful and Open World for Natural Hair", or CROWN Coalition, researchers found that 2 out of 3 Black women change their hair for a job interview, with 41% of women straightening their hair; and

Whereas, Reports indicate hair relaxers often include chemicals such as sodium hydroxide or lye, glycolic acid, and formaldehyde; and

Whereas, According to the federal Department of Health and Human Services, hair relaxers containing formaldehyde or lye may contribute to both short term and long term adverse health effects, including breathing problems and increased risk of certain forms of cancer; and

Whereas, One study from *Carcinogenesis* investigating why Black women are disproportionately affected by aggressive breast cancer subtypes showed that lifetime usage of hair relaxers containing lye may be

responsible for these disproportionate rates; and

Whereas, A cohort study from *American Journal of Epidemiology*, found that the use of hair relaxers was associated with decreased reproductive potential; and

Whereas, *Environmental Research* also noted the usage of hair relaxers as a potential risk factor for uterine cancer; and

Whereas, Some hair relaxer brands do not identify all of these harmful chemicals in their product's chemical lists; and

Whereas, An investigation from the New York State Department of Health found hair relaxer and straightening brands that marketed themselves as "formaldehyde-free" or "natural" actually contained formaldehyde when tested; and

Whereas, The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) introduced a proposal to ban formaldehyde in hair relaxing and straightening products, but after President Trump signed an Executive Order pausing all federal regulations, the ban is in limbo; and

Whereas, California, Washington, and Maryland have banned formaldehyde in hair products, and with no federal or New York bans in place, it is even more important for consumers to understand the products they are using, especially when those products are linked to adverse health effects; and

Whereas, A.1797, introduced by Assembly Member Alicia Hyndman and pending in the New York State Assembly, would amend the general business law to require that hair relaxer products display labels when they contain certain dangerous chemicals; and

Whereas, A.1797 would require that any hair relaxers with carcinogens or reproductive toxins indicate such on their warning label; and

Whereas, It is important that consumers are able to make an informed decision about their purchases, especially if their health and wellness could be compromised because of a product's ingredients; and

Whereas, With the prevalence of dangerous chemicals in hair relaxer products, it is imperative beauty brands selling these products keep consumers informed of a chemical's presence; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, that the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.1797, to require that hair relaxer products display labels when they contain certain dangerous chemicals.

LS #18632
02/18/2025
RLB