

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Tracy Gregoire, 207-504-2556, tracy@ldaamerica.org and Nika Beauchamp, 207-699-5798, nbeauchamp@ourhealthyfuture.org

Dozens of Scientists, Children’s Advocates Join Sign-On Letter to Kraft Heinz Urging Public Action to Keep Toxic Chemicals Out of Food

Exposure to phthalates poses unacceptable health risks to pregnant women and young children, scientific studies say—and food is major source of exposure

March 11, 2020 – More than four dozen children’s health advocates, learning disabilities organizations and professionals, and environmental health experts from the U.S. and Canada joined a public sign-on letter [ADD LINK TO LETTER] urging Kraft Heinz to take public action to keep toxic chemicals called phthalates out of its food.

Food is a major source of exposure to phthalates for most Americans, studies show, because the industrial chemicals pollute food through processing and packaging. Phthalates exposure in utero is associated with neurodevelopmental problems in young children, including [ADHD diagnoses](#) and [autistic traits](#), as well as genital malformations in baby boys that can lead to infertility later in life.

Several leading scientific experts who joined the sign-on letter discussed the health harms of phthalates in [this new video](#).

“These industrial chemicals don’t belong in anyone’s food. Yet, studies show that vulnerable populations are exposed to higher levels of phthalates, making this an issue of environmental injustice,” **said Brandon Moore, national campaign director at the Environmental Health Strategy Center, which leads the Coalition for Safer Food Processing & Packaging.** “I’m grateful for all of the organizations, advocates, and scientists who signed onto this letter for raising their voices to defend all of our children—our future—from these harmful chemicals.”

The sign-on letter was organized by the Learning Disabilities Association of America, a member of the [Coalition for Safer Food Processing & Packaging](#), a national alliance of public health and environmental nonprofits organizing calling on food manufacturers to take action to protect consumers’ health by removing phthalates from the U.S. food supply.

“There is strong scientific consensus that early-life exposure to phthalates can harm the brain development of young children—such exposure is linked to learning challenges, ADHD, and impulsivity. Recent studies have even shown possible links to autism. The most vulnerable, including children and pregnant women, are consuming these chemicals in the food they eat,” **said Tracy Gregoire, Healthy Children Project Coordinator at the Learning Disabilities Association of America.** “With so much power in the marketplace, Kraft Heinz can and must

take public action to keep these toxic chemicals out of its supply chain, to protect the health and future of children across the country.”

Phthalates are industrial chemicals used throughout the food supply chain to soften plastics, and in some fragrance, inks, adhesives, and coatings. Studies show eating more processed and fatty food, such as dairy, is linked to higher exposure to phthalates.

In the letter, the experts and advocates observe: “[According to](#) the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 1 in 6 American children have a learning or developmental disability. The National Academy of Sciences [estimates](#) that environmental factors, including toxic chemicals, cause or contribute to at least a quarter of learning and developmental disabilities in American children.”

Indeed, last week, dozens of scientists from around the globe published a [consensus statement](#) in the leading peer-reviewed journal *Environmental Health* warning that lax regulation of chemicals, including phthalates, in food contact materials pose an alarming and growing threat to human health.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released a [policy statement](#) in 2018 calling for U.S. government action to keep phthalates out of food, and Europe, Japan, and the state of Maine have all banned or restricted phthalates from food contact materials.

Nestlé, a competitor of Kraft Heinz, has already committed to finding and removing all sources of phthalates in its packaging.

2017 laboratory testing [discovered](#) phthalates in 10 leading brands of boxed mac and cheese powders, including Kraft’s, as well as a variety of cheese products.

The signatories to the letter represent learning disability organizations from 22 U.S. states and public health experts from leading North American institutions including Harvard University, Columbia University, George Mason University, and Simon Frasier University.

###

[The Coalition for Safer Food Processing & Packaging](#) is a national coalition of nonprofit organizations concerned about human health, food safety, and social justice who are working together to persuade major food manufacturers to identify and eliminate phthalates and other chemicals of high concern from the American food supply.

The Coalition includes the [Environmental Health Strategy Center](#), [Ecology Center](#), [Healthy Babies Bright Futures](#), [Safer Chemicals Healthy Families](#), [WE ACT](#), [Toxic-Free Future](#), [Center for Food Safety](#), the [Learning Disabilities Association of America](#), and others.