

**Opening Statement  
Chairman Raja Krishnamoorthi**

**Hearing on “Examining the Public Health Risks of  
Carcinogens in Consumer Products”**

**March 12, 2019**

Today marks our Subcommittee’s first hearing.

The Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy was created to focus attention on the pocketbook issues that matter most to Americans: economic opportunity and fairness, consumer health and safety, and the overall quality of life.

We will do this, first and foremost, by asking tough questions and following the facts. Today, our focus is on a group of widely-used personal care consumer products

that contain talc, a mineral that manufacturers put in baby powder for infants, make-up for teenage girls, and body care for people of all ages.

Why is this issue important right now? First, recent reports claim that Johnson & Johnson, a maker of personal care products, was aware for decades that its talc products sometimes contained asbestos, a carcinogenic mineral that has killed thousands of miners and shipyard workers. And separately, the Food and Drug Administration recently issued health advisories regarding cosmetics marketed to children containing asbestos.

[These were sold under brands, Justice and Claires]

Let's be clear, there is no question that exposure to asbestos is hazardous to human health. And geologists

know that asbestos can be found in rock formations that also contain talc.

Yet, the FDA cannot order any manufacturer to recall personal care products that potentially contain asbestos.

Why?

Because a loophole in the statute that empowers the FDA to regulate personal care products and cosmetics does not allow the FDA to require necessary recalls.

Thankfully, some manufacturers have voluntarily recalled products FDA found to contain asbestos, **which I thoroughly commend**. But FDA authority remains weak.

In fact, product recalls, mandatory risk labeling, and adverse event reports are just a few of the processes in

which compliance with FDA guidelines is voluntary for the cosmetics industry.

This is a statutory problem that needs reform, and I expect the Energy and Commerce Committee under Chairman Frank Pallone will focus like a laser on that problem to protect consumers.

But juries across America are not waiting for Congress to act.

In fact, juries have awarded verdicts to victims and survivors who have suffered or died from ovarian cancer that was possibly caused by talcum baby powder.

Many of those juries have assessed punitive damages against manufacturers for failing to warn consumers of talcum powder's ovarian cancer risk.

Today, we are joined by women and their families from across the country who suffer from ovarian cancer which they attribute to long-time use of talcum baby powder. One of the families is the Brownings from my home state of Illinois.

Anthony and Alisa Browning, thank you both for being here today on behalf of your mother Gloria Browning. I extend my sincerest condolences to you and your family.

Additionally, one of our witnesses today, Mr. Salter, is the surviving son of a deceased ovarian cancer patient. He will testify to what he, and his mother's doctors, believe caused his mother's death.

Mr. Salter, I want to extend our sympathy to you and personally thank you for joining us today.

We will also hear from a distinguished epidemiologist, Dr. Anne McTiernan, who has conducted extensive analyses of the scientific data on talc and asbestos.

We will hear from the Environmental Working Group, which is devoted to consumer health and education to help us evaluate the problems in the federal regulation of personal care products.

We are also listening to what the largest maker of talcum body powders, Johnson & Johnson, says about the safety of their products.

In preparing for this hearing, my staff has discussed the company's detection methods, manufacturing and mining processes, and the health risk data with senior executives in the company, and I look forward to continuing to gather facts from them as well as from scientists who have come to different conclusions.

The average adult uses nine personal care products daily. Consumers use these products trusting that they are safe and will not harm themselves or their families.

Today's hearing is just our first step in protecting consumers from potentially carcinogenic products.

The American people deserve nothing less.