

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 890

To provide for research to determine the extent to which the presence of dioxin, synthetic fibers, and other additives in tampons and similar products used by women with respect to menstruation pose any risks to the health of women, including risks relating to cervical cancer, endometriosis, infertility, ovarian cancer, breast cancer, immune system deficiencies, pelvic inflammatory disease, and toxic shock syndrome, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 1, 1999

Mrs. MALONEY of New York (for herself, Mr. WAXMAN, Mr. BROWN of California, Ms. NORTON, Mr. FORD, Mr. SANDERS, Mr. FROST, Mr. KENNEDY of Rhode Island, Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas, Ms. KILPATRICK, Ms. LEE, Mr. MATSUI, Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, Mr. MCGOVERN, Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California, Mrs. MINK of Hawaii, Ms. PELOSI, Mr. SANDLIN, Mr. SHOWS, Mrs. THURMAN, and Mrs. JONES of Ohio) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce

A BILL

To provide for research to determine the extent to which the presence of dioxin, synthetic fibers, and other additives in tampons and similar products used by women with respect to menstruation pose any risks to the health of women, including risks relating to cervical cancer, endometriosis, infertility, ovarian cancer, breast cancer, immune system deficiencies, pelvic inflammatory disease, and toxic shock syndrome, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Tampon Safety and
5 Research Act of 1999”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds as follows:

8 (1) Tampons are used by approximately
9 73,000,000 women in the United States today, and
10 the average woman may use as many as 16,800
11 tampons in her lifetime. A woman on estrogen re-
12 placement therapy may use as many as 24,360 tam-
13 pons in her lifetime.

14 (2) The Environmental Protection Agency and
15 the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an
16 arm of the World Health Organization, have con-
17 cluded that dioxins are a probable human carcinogen
18 (cancer causing agent).

19 (3) Dioxin is a byproduct of chlorine-bleaching
20 processes used in the manufacture of paper prod-
21 ucts, including tampons, sanitary pads, panty liners,
22 and diapers.

23 (4) While bleaching processes that do not
24 produce dioxin in any amount are available, most
25 pulp and paper manufacturers, which produce the

1 raw materials used in tampons, currently use either
2 elemental-chlorine or chlorine-dioxide bleaching proc-
3 esses. Both of these bleaching processes use chlorine
4 and therefore produce dioxin.

5 (5) The effects of dioxin from various sources
6 are cumulative and can be measured 20 to 30 years
7 after exposure. Women may be exposed to dioxin in
8 tampons and other menstrual products for as long
9 as 60 years over the course of their reproductive
10 lives.

11 (6) Internal documents of the Food and Drug
12 Administration suggest the agency has not ade-
13 quately investigated the danger of dioxin in tam-
14 pons, according to a 1992 staff report of a sub-
15 committee of the Committee on Government Oper-
16 ations of the House of Representatives.

17 (7) The Food and Drug Administration has his-
18 torically relied on data provided by manufacturers of
19 feminine hygiene products in determining product
20 safety.

21 (8) Although the Food and Drug Administra-
22 tion currently requires tampon manufacturers to
23 monitor dioxin levels in their finished products, the
24 information is not readily available to the public.

1 (9) Recent studies have produced conflicting in-
2 formation about the link between dioxin exposure
3 and increased risks for endometriosis.

4 (10) The Environmental Protection Agency has
5 concluded that people with high levels of exposure to
6 dioxins may be at risk for other noncancer effects
7 that could suppress the immune system, increase the
8 risk of pelvic inflammatory disease, reduce fertility,
9 and interfere with fetal and childhood development.

10 (11) An independent study in 1991 found that
11 tampons commonly included one or more of the fol-
12 lowing additives: Chlorine compounds, absorbency
13 enhancers (such as surfactants like polysorbate-20),
14 natural and synthetic fibers (such as cotton, rayon,
15 polyester, and polyacrylate), deodorant, and fra-
16 grance.

17 (12) Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) has been
18 linked to tampon use and the absorbency of the tam-
19 pon. TSS is a rare bacterial illness that occurs most-
20 ly in menstruating women. During 1979 and 1980,
21 the syndrome was responsible for at least 55 deaths
22 and 1,066 nonfatal cases.

23 (13) In response to a 1988 lawsuit, the Food
24 and Drug Administration has required tampons to
25 be labeled with reference to an absorbency standard

1 (e.g., super tampons must absorb between 9 and 12
2 grams of liquid).

3 (14) Independent research has shown that syn-
4 thetic fiber additives in tampons amplify toxin pro-
5 duction, which is associated with toxic shock syn-
6 drome.

7 **SEC. 3. NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH; RESEARCH ON**
8 **DIOXIN PURSUANT TO OFFICE OF RESEARCH**
9 **ON WOMEN'S HEALTH.**

10 Part F of title IV of the Public Health Service Act
11 (42 U.S.C. 287d et seq.) is amended by adding at the end
12 the following section:

13 **“SEC. 486C. CERTAIN PROJECTS REGARDING WOMEN’S**
14 **HEALTH.**

15 “(a) DIOXIN IN FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS.—

16 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Director of NIH, in
17 collaboration with the Director of the Office, shall
18 provide for the conduct or support of research to de-
19 termine the extent to which the presence of dioxin,
20 synthetic fibers, and other additives in tampons and
21 other feminine hygiene products—

22 “(A) poses any risks to the health of
23 women who use the products, including risks re-
24 lating to cervical cancer, endometriosis, infertil-
25 ity, ovarian cancer, breast cancer, immune sys-

1 tem deficiencies, pelvic inflammatory disease,
2 and toxic shock syndrome; and

3 “(B) poses any risks to the health of chil-
4 dren of women who used such products during
5 or before the pregnancies involved, including
6 risks relating to fetal and childhood develop-
7 ment.

8 “(2) REQUIREMENT REGARDING DATA FROM
9 MANUFACTURERS.—Research under paragraph (1)
10 shall include research to confirm the data on tam-
11 pons and other feminine hygiene products submitted
12 to the Commissioner of Food and Drugs by manu-
13 facturers of such products.

14 “(3) DEFINITION.—For purposes of paragraph
15 (1), the term ‘feminine hygiene products’ means
16 tampons, pads, liners, and similar products used by
17 women with respect to menstruation or other geni-
18 tal-tract secretions.

19 “(b) REPORTS.—Reports on the results of research
20 under subsection (a) shall be periodically submitted to the
21 Congress, the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, the Ad-
22 ministrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and
23 the Chairman of the Consumer Product Safety Commis-
24 sion. Such reports shall be made available to the public
25 through the data system and clearinghouse program es-

1 tablished under section 486A, or through other appro-
2 priate means.”.

