

Environmental

Advocates

NY

## EANY SUPPORTS

# Mercury-Free Skincare



Memo #62

[A.8630-A \(Reyes, et al.\)](#)

[S.8291-A \(Brouk, et al.\)](#)

### **Explanation:**

This legislation would prohibit the use of toxic mercury in personal care products, which disproportionately harm people of color. New York should take aggressive action to protect human health by eliminating the use of this dangerous heavy metal.

Mercury is the main ingredient used in skin-lightening products. Advertisers and marketers often target these products to people of color in an attempt to promote a bias toward more Caucasian skin tones, which perpetuates colorism. Mercury exposure [can cause](#) kidney damage, skin scarring, as well as a reduction in the skin's resistance to infections. Other effects include anxiety, depression, psychosis and nerve damage.

The FDA [banned](#) the use of mercury in personal care products at levels higher than 1 part per million in 1973, but many companies and distributors continue to offer such products for sale. A March 2022 [report](#) from the Zero Mercury Working Group revealed that many skin lightening creams sold by online retailers like Amazon and eBay contained dangerous and illegal levels of mercury.

This bill will give New York an important legal tool to hold businesses accountable for distributing products that are endangering human health. California and Maryland have both banned mercury from personal care products. It is time for New York to follow suit.

### **Summary:**

This bill amends the environmental conservation law to prohibit cosmetic products and personal care products that contain mercury.