



Legislation Text

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Res. No. 1387

Resolution calling upon the State Department of Health to study and to regulate the exposure of nurses to toxic substances.

By Council Members Brewer, Fidler, Gennaro, James, Liu, Palma, Recchia Jr., Sanders Jr., Sears, Stewart, White Jr. and Jackson.

Whereas, The American Nurses Association reports that, everyday, nurses come into contact with many hazardous chemicals and substances including pesticides, disinfectants, sterilants, floor care products and hazardous drugs, such as those used in chemotherapy; and

Whereas, A 2003 study published in the journal *Hospital Pharmacy* concluded that preparation of potentially hazardous drugs can release drug solutions into the work environment and that, during all phases of drug preparation and administration, leakage was present which could contaminate work surfaces and equipment; and

Whereas, These harmful chemicals and substances can be inhaled, accidentally ingested and absorbed through the skin, according to the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP); and

Whereas, According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 5.5 million health care workers may be exposed to hazardous drugs; and

Whereas, A national survey by Environmental Working Group (EWG) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) indicated that 32 percent of nurses reported frequent exposure (at least twice a week) to at least five chemicals and 50 percent reported regular (at least once a week) exposure to at least six chemicals; and

Whereas, According to a review of 20 research studies by the CDC, urine samples of health care workers from 13 of the studies contained six harmful drugs; and

Whereas, The CDC has identified numerous risks associated with handling hazardous drugs and/or chemicals as including, but not being limited to, asthma, skin rashes, infertility, miscarriages, birth defects, and possible leukemia or other cancers; and

Whereas, The CDC review of studies also found many that implied that carcinogenic drugs may cause genetic mutations and cancer in those who are exposed to them, and that 14 of the 20 studies suggested an association between exposure to carcinogenic drugs and harmful reproductive effects such as increased miscarriages, malformation, low birth weight, and infertility; and

Whereas, A 2005 survey conducted by the Oncology Nursing Society found that nurses who handled chemotherapy drugs prior to and during pregnancy were 2.3 to five times more likely to give birth prematurely and have children with learning disabilities; and

Whereas, A study conducted by the American Nurses Association in 2001 found that, out of 13,759 participants, 678 were concerned about effects of toxic chemicals, exposure to chemotherapy drugs, and smoke from lasers; and

Whereas, The study by EWG and HCWH also found that 730 of the 1,552 nurses surveyed had a variety of different health conditions, that 50 percent have had diagnosed reproductive problems and that asthma rates increased 50 percent for nurses reporting high exposure to sterilizing and disinfecting chemicals; and

Whereas, New York State nurses made up 114 respondents of the EWG and HCWH study and, of those, 34 percent strongly agreed that exposure to chemicals may affect their health and 43 percent had diagnosed reproductive problems; and

Whereas, The potential harms from hazardous chemicals and the frequency of exposures make proper safety precautions imperative to the health of nurses and health-care practitioners, according to the ASHP; and

Whereas, The ASHP notes that using gloves, gowns, shoe coverings and eye and face protection while handling potentially toxic chemicals is essential and should be mandatory; and

Whereas, The survey by EWG and HCWH indicated that appropriate safety standards exist for only six

of the hundreds of toxic substances that nurses are exposed to daily; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the State Department of Health to study and to regulate the exposure of nurses to toxic substances.

AS
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4/3/08