

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

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**SUFFOLK TO STUDY ENVIRONMENTAL,
ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF MICROBEADS**

HAUPPAUGE, NY – Suffolk County will study the health and economic impacts of banning microbeads, the small plastic particles found in personal care that has been linked to aquatic die off in the Great Lakes. This comes after the passage of a bill this week sponsored by Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) that directs the Suffolk County Departments of Health Services (SCDHS) and Economic Development and Planning to examine the effects these inorganic additives have on our local environment and what, if any impact a County-wide ban would have on Long Island’s businesses and labor force. The analysis will also look at what potential non-polluting, natural, alternatives may be available to supplement or replace the use of polyethylene and polypropylene.

At less than 1 millimeter in diameter, microbeads are not filtered out by most wastewater treatment systems, leading to their discharge into surface waters. Earlier this year, New York State Attorney General Eric T. Schneiderman issued a report that estimated over 19 tons of microbeads are released into New York’s wastewater stream annually with very little of that being removed before discharge.

[More]

“On a macro level, there is no doubt that microbeads are finding their way into our nation’s rivers, lakes and oceans,” said Legislator Hahn, Chairwoman of the Legislature’s Environment, Planning and Agriculture Committee. “What we need to know is to what extent, locally, these additives impacting on our environment and if corrective action is needed, what ramifications would be expected.”

In June, Illinois became the first state to outright ban the sale of cosmetics containing plastic microbeads by 2019. Under that law, legislators in the “Prairie State” give producers until 2017 before banning the manufacture of products containing these beads and until 2019 before prohibiting the sale of products to consumers. The timeline should allow manufacturers time to develop and bring to market natural alternatives.

The bill now goes to County Executive Steve Bellone for his expected signature. Once signed, department officials will have up to 90 days to provide a written report on their findings and recommendations to the County Executive and the County Legislature, which may call for subsequent policy decisions by law makers.