

United States Senate

February 17, 2023

The Honorable Robert M. Califf, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Building 32, Room 2346
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Commissioner Califf:

In 2020, I contacted the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), sharing my concerns about the unacceptable and unsafe levels of lead, cadmium, and mercury found in baby food and prenatal vitamins. After months of inaction from the FDA to address to critical issue, I contacted your agency again in 2021 to demand change. While I find it unacceptable that it took years of urging from myself and others, I am glad to see FDA finally announce draft guidance to reduce lead levels in baby food. However, the reduction of lead levels to 10 parts per billion (ppb) in yogurt, fruits and vegetables, and to no more than 20 ppb in root vegetables and dry infant cereals, fails to protect our children.

The guidance FDA proposes does not go far enough. A 2018 study by Consumer Reports found that 34 of the 50 popular baby foods tested had concerning levels of lead, cadmium, or arsenic. The World Health Organization lists lead, cadmium, and arsenic as three of the Top 10 Chemicals of Public Health Concern. Reports indicate that a majority of the food in the marketplace already complies with these new standards. FDA's recent guidance does not reduce levels significantly enough for children and completely fails to address other toxic metals found in baby food.

As families across America face skyrocketing food prices, and parents continue to have difficulty finding baby formula to feed their newborn children, the last thing the Biden administration should be doing is giving hardworking Americans yet another thing to be worried about. The FDA must do better.

As part of my continued interested in the safety of baby food for all Americans, I request answers to the following questions no later than March 1, 2023:

- Is 10 ppb a safe level for lead in food for children?
- What is the safe level for lead exposure in food products?

The Honorable Robert M. Califf, M.D.

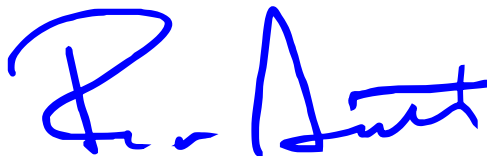
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- What action, if any, is FDA planning for cadmium and arsenic in baby food?
- In the 2018 Consumer Reports study, they found that 80% of baby foods had lead levels below 10ppb. Why did FDA stop at 10ppb, rather than use a lower level?

The continued safety of baby food products is important to the overall health of all Americans. Babies are our future and continuing to risk their health based on outdated guidelines places the security of the American people's future at risk. I look forward to working with you and my colleagues in Congress to find ways to better protect our most vulnerable and safeguard the future of these young Americans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator