

THE YOUTH POISONING PROTECTION ACT

Endorsing Organizations

Oriene Shin, Policy Counsel at Consumer Reports:

“There is no reason why dangerous concentrations of this chemical compound should be available to everyone with just the click of a mouse. Too many families have been shattered and this product should only be available commercially. We urge every member of Congress to support this bipartisan bill and ban the unrestricted sale of high concentrations of this poison.”

Martha Perez-Pedemonti, Civil Justice & Consumer Rights Counsel at Public Citizen:

“Public Citizen applauds Representative Trahan for leading the effort to remove consumer products containing high concentrations of sodium nitrite, a poisonous hazardous product, by introducing the Youth Poisoning Protection Act. If enacted, this law will help save the lives of some of the most vulnerable members of our community.”

Thomas Gremillion, Director of Food Policy at Consumer Federation of America:

“The Youth Poisoning Protection Act will literally save lives. By setting sensible guidelines on who can buy sodium nitrite, the bill will ensure that this deadly substance is used as intended.”

Sally Greenberg, Executive Director at National Consumers League:

“Products that contribute to our national suicide epidemic are inherently unsafe and should not be available at the click of a button. We applaud Representative Trahan’s leadership in pushing for the removal of products containing dangerous levels of sodium nitrite from the marketplace.”

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Courtney Gallo Hunter, Vice President of Public Policy at Crisis Text Line:

“Crisis Text Line is proud to support Rep. Trahan's Youth Poisoning Protection Act, which would prohibit the online sale of highly concentrated amounts of sodium nitrite. At Crisis Text Line, the majority of our texters reaching out for support are under the age of 24. We know that suicide prevention works and we must continue to protect young adults from lethal means. The Youth Poisoning Protection Act is a critical step in the right direction.”

Dr. Sean D. McCann, Emergency Medicine Physician at University of Illinois Hospital and Assistant Professor of Clinical Emergency Medicine and Medical Toxicology at University of Illinois College of Medicine:

“In the fall of 2019, I was on call for the Illinois Poison Center when a 17-year-old girl’s heart stopped within minutes of arriving to an Emergency Department after ingesting what her sister described to doctors as “sodium something” she had purchased online. At the time we didn’t know what she had ingested but recognized the effects right away, a condition called methemoglobinemia in which the blood is stripped of its ability to carry oxygen. As the Emergency Department team performed CPR, we recommended treatment with the antidote for this condition: a drug called methylene blue. Despite receiving the antidote during CPR, she was unable to be resuscitated. In the following weeks we saw the same poisoning in four more young people, half of whom died. We learned that sodium nitrite was easily obtainable in large quantities and high purity from online retailers and that this was being recommended as a means of suicide in online communities. Poison centers across the country were noticing similar trends, and medical examiners were identifying on autopsy more cases that never survived long enough to be reported to poison centers. We have continued to see similar cases and are now intimately familiar with severe sodium nitrite poisoning. A fraction of a teaspoon of pure sodium nitrite, easily dissolved in water and ingested in an impulsive act, can be rapidly fatal. An antidote exists, but this poison kills so quickly that it is often too late. Prevention may be the only way to ensure we don’t see a continued rise in the number of young lives lost to this potent toxin.”

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Dr. Anita Mudan, Emergency Medicine Physician at Columbia University Medical Center's Department of Emergency Medicine:

"Intentional sodium nitrite ingestions for the purpose of suicide have rapidly increased over the past few years, largely driven by online suicide forums and the relative ease of acquisition of the chemical itself. Its toxicity, predominantly due to its interference with oxygen delivery in the body, occurs rapidly following ingestion and can lead to fulminant cardiovascular collapse within 30 minutes. Despite the availability of an antidote, these intentional ingestions have significant morbidity due to the high concentration products used, and despite maximal medical therapy the mortality is still high. While restricting access to sodium nitrite is not going to eliminate these cases entirely, making it harder to access the product can help decrease the number of cases and potentially open a window of opportunity for other mental health interventions."

Carrie Goldberg and Naomi Leeds, C.A. Goldberg, PLLC, lead counsel representing Ruth Scott and families across the United States whose children died from purchasing sodium nitrite online.

"Over two years ago we first started urging an online retailer to stop selling industrial grade sodium nitrite to households, informing them that it was touted on suicide message boards and had killed our clients' children. The retailer said even if it was used for suicide, it had no responsibility to stop selling it because it's a "legal" product. So they kept selling it, delivering it to homes even though it has no household use, and killing more teens and vulnerable adults. Most consumers do not realize how deadly a small quantity of this product is, how excruciating it is to ingest, or how unlikely survival is even if you throw it up or call 911. On behalf of the dozens of heartbroken families we're working with, we express regret this bill couldn't save their loved ones and gratitude for the lives it will spare."

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Ruth Scott of Schertz Texas, mother of Mikael Scott. Ruth was the first person to blow the whistle in court on online retailers for knowingly selling sodium nitrite.

“The road to this bill has been filled with tragedy, loss and sorrow. This law will serve as a beacon to all retailers making industrial grade sodium nitrite illegal to sell to the general public. Every innocent life that was lost through the unconscionable sale and doorstep delivery of sodium nitrite is on notice. No mother should have to mourn the loss of her only son.”

Kristin Jónsson, mother of Kristine Jónsson, of Hilliard Ohio, who is holding an online seller accountable in federal court.

“So often people shrug their shoulders and think that if someone wants to die by suicide, there’s just nothing to be done, but the truth is that when lethal means are not available, the crisis will often pass. If this bill existed when companies first learned of the SN danger, my daughter would have had a chance. Someday there will be a mother who is spared the pain our family is going through because this so-called quick and easy method recommended online won’t be available.

I’m incredibly grateful to this group of lawmakers, including my own representative, Mike Carey. Psychologists have long known that an important part of suicide prevention is simply reducing access to lethal means of suicide. Suicide is often impulsive, and when something is easily available, people don’t have any time to change their minds, even though we know that most suicidal impulses pass when given a bit of time. Getting this substance, which has been touted as an easy suicide method, away from people, will result in many lives being saved. Somewhere there is a mother who won’t experience my pain. And for that, I am forever grateful.”

If you or someone you know is having suicidal thoughts, feeling at risk of suicide, or experiencing a state of distress, it is crucial to find help immediately. There are many [resources available](#), including the [988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline](#) which provides free, confidential support 24/7, and the [Crisis Text Line](#) which offers free crisis counseling 24/7. Dial 988 or text HOME to 741741 to connect with these services.