

Esther's Law

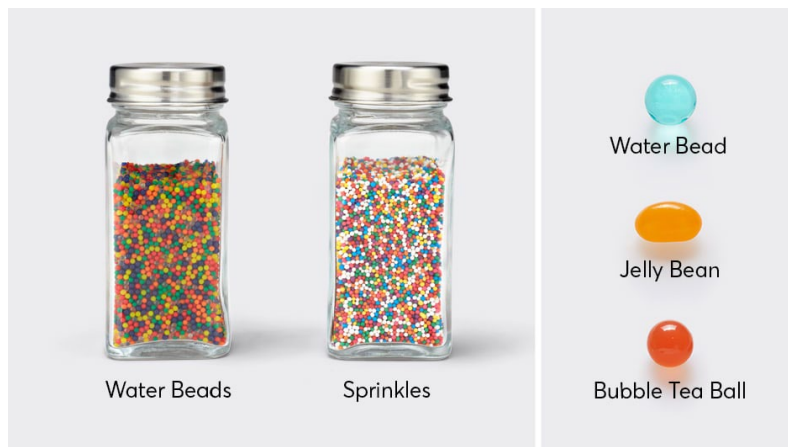
Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), & Senator Susan Collins (R-ME)

Esther's Law is named for Esther Jo Bethard, a 10-month-old from North Prairie, Wisconsin who lost her life after she swallowed a stray water bead. If passed, this legislation will protect other children from the tragedy that struck the Bethard family, and others.

What are Water Beads?

Water beads are tiny spheres made of super-absorbent polymers that can grow up to 100X their size – some to nearly the size of a golf ball – when exposed to liquids. They are often sold as toys or sensory tools for young children, including children with disabilities. These beads are typically brightly colored and look like sprinkles or candy, making them attractive to children, who may ultimately put the water beads in their mouths, ears, or noses. Despite careful adult supervision and restrictions to prevent younger children in the home from using the beads, the beads' initial small size and bouncy nature allow them to easily scatter and become hidden in carpets, grooves of hardwood floors, toys, or other areas. This makes it possible for them to later be found and ingested by a child or pet, without the knowledge of an adult.

Once ingested, the water beads grow—resulting in gastrointestinal blockages, hearing damage, and other serious medical conditions that often require surgical intervention. The ingredients that compose some water beads have also been shown to be toxic, resulting in poisonings and potentially complicating recovery for some children. Furthermore, water beads may not appear on x-rays and ingestion symptoms often mimic common viruses, leading to delays in detection and treatment.



Photos: Scott Meadows/Consumer Reports.

Esther's Law:

Esther's Law will protect children and pets by limiting children's access to water beads. Specifically, it would:

- Direct the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to establish a ban on water beads products marketed to children as toys, educational materials, sensory tools, or art materials;
- Direct CPSC to consider regulations on the colors of other water beads that pose an ingestion hazard to limit their attractiveness to children; and
- Direct CPSC to require warning labels on packages of water beads that are used for other purposes.

Esther's Law is supported by: Parent advocates through That Water Bead Lady; Amazon; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Association of People with Disabilities; Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN); Autism Society of America; Autism Speaks; Center for Pet Safety; Children's Hospital Association; Consumer Federation of America; Consumer Reports; Early Care & Education Consortium; Etsy; Kids in Danger (KID); Michaels; National Center for Health Research; National Health Law Project; National Retail Federation; North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN); Public Citizen; Public Interest Research Group (PIRG); Reese's Purpose; Safe Infant Sleep; Safe Kids Worldwide; Target; Walmart. **A full list of endorsements is available on the following page.**

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- Amazon;
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- Autism Speaks;
- Center for Pet Safety;
- Children’s Hospital Association;
- Children’s Wisconsin;
- Consumer Federation of America;
- Consumer Reports;
- Early Care & Education Consortium;
- Etsy;
- Hospital and Healthsystem Association of Pennsylvania
- Kids in Danger (KID);
- Michaels;
- National Center for Health Research;
- National Health Law Project;
- National Retail Federation;
- North American Society for Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition (NASPGHAN);
- Public Citizen;
- Public Interest Research Group (PIRG);
- Reese’s Purpose;
- Safe Infant Sleep;
- Safe Kids Chicago;
- Safe Kids Colorado Springs;
- Safe Kids Connecticut;
- Safe Kids Greater Sacramento;
- Safe Kids Guilford County;
- Safe Kids Montgomery/Elk;
- Safe Kids Pennsylvania;
- Safe Kids Stanislaus;
- Safe Kids Winnebago County;
- Safe Kids Wisconsin;
- Safe Kids Worldwide;
- Target;
- UPMC Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh;
- Valley Children’s Healthcare;
- Walmart;
- Wisconsin Poison Center.