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## Suffolk's Ban on BPA Hailed in Some Quarters

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HUNTINGTON

**L**AURYN BLANK was enjoying pizza and conversation with a friend at a restaurant in the Walt Whitman Mall here when her 14-month-old son, who had been picking through noodles and vegetables, knocked his sippy cup into her lap.

Ms. Blank, 33, of Woodbury, didn't even flinch, calmly placing the cup back in front of him.

"That's BPA free," she said, demonstrating that she was well aware of the potential dangers for children beyond spilled milk.

Bisphenol-A, a hardening agent used in many brands of clear plastic baby bottles and sippy cups, was unanimously banned for such uses about two weeks ago by the Suffolk County Legislature. Legislator Steven H. Stern, who sponsored the measure, said the Suffolk Legislature was the first governmental body in the country to pass a BPA ban. Animal studies have linked the substance to a range of health problems.

"It's scary," said Anna D'Egidio, 33, of Port Washington, who was with her 7-month-old daughter, Carolina, at a Babies R Us store in Westbury. She had just bought a set of BPA-free children's plates because of her fears, she said. "You have to think about everything you put in your child's mouth," Ms. D'Egidio said.

Bisphenol-A, or BPA, is used to make shatterproof plastic bottles, as a sealant in canned foods and in products ranging from CDs to sunglasses.

In a draft risk assessment last August, the Food and Drug Administration said the levels of BPA to which children and adults are exposed do not pose a meaningful risk. Studies with laboratory animals have shown that it appears to accelerate puberty and pose a cancer risk. Most concerns about BPA focus on children, but some recent reports suggest it interferes with chemotherapy, and in adults it has been linked to higher risk of heart disease and diabetes.

"I believe there is compelling evidence that it poses a danger to babies and young children," Mr. Stern said.

"If there is a known risk and there are safe alternatives," he said, "then this is legislation that makes sense."

County Executive Steve Levy, who will sign or veto the bill, is holding a hearing on the issue Monday. If it becomes law, the measure would allow retailers who sell banned products to be fined \$500. A second offense would double the fine to \$1,000.

A Nassau County legislator and chairman of the Health and Social Services Committee, Dave Mejias, Democrat of Farmingdale, said he has drafted a similar bill banning BPA baby products and plans to introduce it soon.

San Francisco tried to ban BPA in children's products in 2006 but backed off after the bill was challenged in court. California, Hawaii, Washington and Oregon are considering similar measures. Canada enacted a ban in October.

Six major manufacturers of children's products — Playtex Products, Gerber, Evenflow, Avent America, Dr. Brown's and Disney First Years — recently agreed to stop selling plastic polycarbonate baby bottles and other products made with BPA in the United States. That came after a request from the Connecticut attorney general, Richard Blumenthal, that was joined by the attorneys general in Delaware and New Jersey.

"I think it's great they passed it," said Ms. Blank's lunchtime friend, Karen Levine, 31, of Roslyn, who was at the restaurant with her 16-month-old son. "At least now when you go into a store, you don't have to worry if something is BPA free or not."

**C**HILDREN'S products made with BPA are still on the shelves of some Suffolk County stores, because the measure is not yet law. But a spokesman for Babies R Us said all of the baby bottles and baby feeding products the company sells now are BPA free.

The American Chemistry Council, which represents companies that make BPA, persuaded the California Assembly not to pass such a ban last October. Steve Hentges, a council spokesman, said the Suffolk County move is "unwarranted and will unnecessarily alarm the public."

The Food and Drug Administration assessment that BPA is safe relied largely on two studies financed by the chemical industry. A 2007 study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 93 percent of Americans age 6 and up have traces of BPA in their system, with children having the highest levels.