A.8744 Sweeney

**Bill Summary:**
This bill prohibits the manufacture, distribution and sale of personal cosmetic products containing micro beads.

**Justification:**
Many cosmetic products on the market today, including shampoos, soaps, skin cleansers, exfoliant scrubs and toothpastes contain abrasive agents made from microscopic beads of plastic. These synthetic particles have been recently used as alternatives to traditional scouring agents like pulverized nutshells, grain hulls, fruit pits and inert minerals. While most consumers can't tell the difference between the natural and the synthetic, the impact that these plastic “micro beads” are having upon our environment is significant and concerning. Almost all cosmetic products are washed down drains after use and end up in our water treatment facilities - the majority of which cannot filter out the floating plastic particles that are then released into our waterways with the effluent discharge. Despite their size, micro beads are having a huge impact on our waterways amounting to as much as 90% of the new plastic waste in the Great Lakes. Unlike other forms of trash on our beaches, there is no way to clean up these tiny plastic particles once they are introduced into the environment.

What makes micro beads especially insidious is that they bind with persistent organic pollutants already contaminating our waterways from discarded solvents, pesticides and pharmaceuticals. These chemicals alone can cause death and illnesses including disruption of the endocrine, reproductive, and immune systems; neurobehavioral disorders; and cancers. But when bound to the plastic micro bead they create a toxic pellet that resembles food for fish, amphibians and other aquatic life that bio-accumulates these hazardous chemicals within their flesh over time. If we follow the food chain, fish that are laden with toxins can end up on the dinner table or in pet food.

A few companies like Johnson & Johnson (Neutrogena) are already in the process of removing plastic micro beads from the products they make. But voluntary measures will not protect New Yorkers from the hundreds of brands and products on the shelves that continue to use synthetic abrasive particles. (If you want to find them in your own bathroom, “micro beads” masquerade as polyethylene or polypropylene on product ingredient lists) A.8744 will ban the sale of any cosmetic product sold in New York containing plastic micro beads and put an end to this unnecessary and harmful pollutant in our waterways.

**Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter urges your support of this urgently important legislation.**