

# Chicago Tribune



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BREAKING NEWS AT CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM

## FDA urged to act on toxic food packaging

Study: Chemicals from materials detected in humans worldwide

By Michael Hawthorne  
Chicago Tribune

Evidence is mounting that food packaging and plastic tableware contain toxic chemicals absorbed by humans, a public health risk largely ignored by federal officials charged with protecting the nation's food supply.

During the past week alone, a new study detailed how more than 3,600 chemicals in food-related materials have been detected in people worldwide.

A companion review of recently published research confirmed 189 chemicals linked to breast cancer have been found in the materials, 76 of which migrate out of packaging and utensils during normal use.

Many of these chemicals were approved decades ago by the Food and Drug Administration with little, if any, oversight.

"Some have never been reviewed by the FDA at all because food and chemical companies are exploiting a loophole that lets them, rather than the FDA, decide whether a chemical is safe," said Melanie Benesh, vice president for government affairs at the Environmental Working Group, one of several nonprofit organizations that have repeatedly petitioned the agency to ban toxic substances in food and packaging.

"It's no surprise that consumer confidence in food chemical safety is falling," Benesh said.

Years of legal and political pressure are just now forcing changes in an arm of the government long dominated by industry priorities rather than public health concerns.

After decades of denial, the FDA is vowing to overhaul its review processes and conduct more rigorous reviews of food chemicals already on the market.

Details remain slim. Agency officials cautioned Wednesday their budget to assess chemicals doesn't come close to the amount necessary to conduct a robust safety program.

"You have to start somewhere," Jim Jones, the FDA's first-ever deputy commissioner for human foods, said during a public discussion about the agency's plans.

Jones, who formerly ran the chemical safety office at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, noted that several states have

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Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez, left, Mayor Brandon Johnson and others gather for a rally celebrating several dozens of Chicago Public Schools Safe Passage employees at the Wintrust Arena in Chicago on Aug. 15. **ANTONIO PEREZ/CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

## CPS backs embattled CEO in public statement

Johnson focuses off Martinez, cites work to 'transform' CPS

By Jake Sheridan  
Chicago Tribune

Mayor Brandon Johnson asserted a mandate to "transform" Chicago Public Schools and expand school investments Wednesday when asked to explain his ongoing effort to push CPS CEO Pedro Martinez out of office.

The mayor carefully avoided criticizing Martinez directly when asked in an interview with the Tribune why he called on the school district leader to resign last week. But he professed a need for new direction in the Chicago public schools and said he was "elected to transform this school district."

"That is exactly what I intend to do," Johnson said. "We are moving in a different

direction based upon what the people of Chicago want. They want me to invest in their children, invest in their communities, and that is exactly what we are doing."

Johnson and Martinez had largely remained measured in public statements as tensions grew over Martinez's refusal to close CPS' budget gap by taking on loans. But both leaders are now more forcefully arguing for their schooling visions ahead of a Board of Education meeting Thursday where Martinez's future could be determined.

Johnson's interview with the Tribune was his first to focus on Martinez's leadership since he privately called on Martinez to step down. But

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Board of Education president says it's not a 'joint statement'

By Sarah Macaraeg, Ikram Mohamed and Sylvan Lebrun  
Chicago Tribune

As Thursday's Board of Education meeting approaches, a publicized miscommunication between Chicago Public Schools leadership and board President Jianan Shi may signal a rift just when Chief Executive Officer Pedro Martinez needs board support the most.

In response to what the Chicago Public Schools' communications team initially called a "joint statement," sent to reporters Tuesday afternoon, Shi posted to his X page at 7 p.m. that it was, in fact, "not a joint statement."

"As Board President, I am just seeing this now," Shi

wrote regarding the district's comments, which declared that the Board of Education had "no plans to take action" on Martinez's contract at the upcoming meeting, and would also not consider the question of taking out a high-interest loan to cover CPS' budget gap. Mayor Brandon Johnson has advanced the borrowing plan, which Martinez has continued to oppose — most recently in a Tribune editorial Tuesday which confirmed rumors that the CEO declined Johnson's request that he resign.

In the statement, CPS also again refuted claims of planned school closures — which the Chicago Teachers Union continued to accuse the district of planning at a public

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## Israeli army chief hints at invasion of Lebanon

Troops told strikes in the country intended to prepare for entry

By Melanie Lidman, Tia Goldenberg and Kareem Chehayeb  
Associated Press

TEL AVIV, Israel — Israel is preparing for a possible ground operation in Lebanon, its army chief said Wednesday as Hezbollah fired dozens of rockets across the border and a missile aimed at Tel Aviv that was the militant group's deepest strike yet.

Addressing troops on the northern border, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi said Israel's punishing airstrikes this week were designed to "prepare the ground for your possible entry and to continue degrading Hezbollah."

Israel says it targeted Hezbollah weapons and rocket launchers in attacks that have killed more than 600 people, at least a quarter of them women and children, according to Lebanese health officials.

In an apparent reference to the missile fired at Tel Aviv, Halevi



told troops: "Today, Hezbollah expanded its range of fire, and later today, they will receive a very strong response. Prepare yourselves."

It was not clear whether he was referring to a ground operation, airstrikes or some other form of

retaliation against Hezbollah, which is Lebanon's strongest political force and, with backing from Iran, is widely considered the top paramilitary group in the Arab world.

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A man walks through the rubble in Baalbek, Lebanon, following Israeli airstrikes on Wednesday. Tensions between Israel and Hezbollah have steadily escalated since war broke out 11 months ago between Israel and Hamas. **DIEGO IBARRA SANCHEZ/THE NEW YORK TIMES**

### INSIDE



CHRIS SWEDA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

### Sox avoid history books — for a night

A crazy Tuesday night on the South Side saw White Sox fans conflicted over breaking the MLB loss record. **Paul Sullivan in Chicago Sports**

### It's goodbye, Hubert, and hello, BMO Guy

BMO celebrates 40 years in the city by dropping the Harris name, ending a 141-year run for a Chicago banking brand. **Business**

### Trip to underworld in 'The Penguin'

Colin Farrell takes on Gotham's Scarface in HBO's compelling gangland saga. **Michael Phillips' review in Arts & Living**

