

## CPSC Priorities Hearing

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Commissioners.

My name is Taylor Bethard, speaking on behalf of Esther Bethard.

Esther Jo, as we affectionately called her, was born on August 28th, 2022. She had a giant smile that brightened up the whole room, beautiful blue eyes and perfectly curly red hair. She was full of curiosity and loved being where the action was. Esther was fiercely loved and adored by her 4 older siblings. They would make sure she had all the snacks she ever wanted, dance with her and sing to her just to make her laugh.

On the morning of July 7th, rather than walking into her room to be met with her mesmerizing blue eyes and grin from ear to ear like I was accustomed to, I walked into the unimaginable. A mother's worst nightmare. My baby wasn't breathing. She had no pulse. My kids watched as I screamed in terror and began CPR. A sight and feeling we will never forget.

Our sweet Esther Jo is gone. All because of a toy. We had purchased water beads for her older siblings, which were only ever used under adult supervision. Esther was a baby. She never once played with them, or even allowed in the same space when they were used. So when I learned that a water bead caused her death, I was shocked. We hadn't even had them out to play with in months. I followed the directions. There is no warning about what could happen if ingested. If there had been, I would've never allowed water beads in my home for my older kids to use. The risks are far too great. But I wasn't warned.

Unfortunately, it took the death of my beautiful Esther Jo for a recall of the Chuckle & Roar Ultimate Water Bead Activity Kit to occur. However, this is just ONE water bead product marketed towards children. A simple online search shows that there are plenty more water bead "toys" for sale, and injuries continue to occur. Something HAS to change.

In order to ensure that other families do not have to endure the same senseless tragedy mine has, I'm asking that the CPSC move the water bead rule forward and include the enforcement of this ruling in the agenda and priorities for 2026 and 2027.

Nearly two years later, my husband and I are still fielding questions from Esther's siblings. Still grappling with the giant hole left in our family. Continuously reliving the horror from July 7, 2023, while fighting to give Esther Jo a voice. A voice that shouts our children deserve better. Families deserve better. Thank you for hearing Esther's voice today.