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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH

Senator Akilah Weber Pierson, Chair

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**BILL NO:** AB 1571  
**AUTHOR:** Michelle Rodriguez  
**VERSION:** January 12, 2026  
**HEARING DATE:** June 10, 2026  
**CONSULTANT:** Margarita Niemann

**SUBJECT:** Product safety: recreational water safety: wearable personal flotation devices: infants and children

**SUMMARY:** Updates the definition in existing law for “wearable personal flotation device” to include a “swim vest,” rather than “puddle jumper.”

**Existing state law:**

- 1) Defines “wearable personal flotation device” as a lifejacket, puddle jumper, water wings, or other flotation device designed to be worn or attached to the body of an infant or child. [HSC §116023]
- 2) Prohibits a person or entity from manufacturing, selling, distributing, delivering, holding, or offering for sale in commerce in this state a wearable personal flotation device that is not approved by the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG). [HSC §116023.5]

**Existing federal law:** Permits the USCG to prescribe regulations for the design, construction, performance, testing, carriage, use, and inspection of lifesaving equipment on commercial and recreational vessels. [46 U.S. Code §4102(b) and §4502(c)]

**This bill:** Deletes the term “puddle jumper” from the definition of “wearable personal flotation device,” and adds the term “swim vest” to the definition.

**FISCAL EFFECT:** This bill is keyed non-fiscal.

**PRIOR VOTES:**

Assembly Floor: 64 - 0  
Assembly Privacy & Consumer Protection Committee: 15 - 0

**COMMENTS:**

- 1) *Author’s statement.* According to the author, the original legislation that put statute into law is very important. Banning personal flotation devices not approved by the USCG protects families from purchasing products not intended to preserve a life. However, some products in this category, particularly those sold under the trademark “Puddle Jumper,” may be unfairly affected in current statute. These products could be banned in California despite being approved by the USCG. This bill is making a simple but necessary change to resolve this issue.
- 2) *Wearable personal floatation devices.* According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), approximately 85% of people who drowned while boating in 2022 were not wearing a life jacket. The CDC highlights that life jackets reduce the risk of drowning while boating for people of all ages and swimming abilities. They should be used by children for all activities in and around natural water, as well as by weaker swimmers of all ages in

and around natural water and swimming pools. The USCG states that all personal flotation devices must be evaluated and tested by a Coast Guard recognized laboratory. The recognized laboratory evaluates the product, conducts necessary testing, certifies compliant devices, and conducts factory inspections. The USCG categorizes personal flotation devices, also commonly referred to as lifejackets and buoyancy aids, as: commercial, recreational, and throwable personal flotation devices.

Despite the fact that the USCG does not recognize floaties and water wings as safe personal flotation devices, a 2022 survey conducted by The Harris Poll on behalf of the Pool & Hot Tub Alliance found that 66% of parents believe that floaties and water wings keep children safe in the water. In fact, floaties and water wings are categorized as toys by the U.S. Consumer product commission, and are instead required to meet the American Society for Testing Materials International (ASTM) toy standards. ASTM F963-17 toy standards requires all aquatic toys to carry safety labeling, consisting of the signal word “WARNING” and contain, at a minimum, the following text: “This is not a lifesaving device. Do not leave a child unattended while the device is in use.” The ASTM also prohibits any text or graphics that state or imply that a child will be safe with such a toy if left unsupervised. To help prevent drownings as well as prevent the false sense of security created by floaties and water wings, AB 2146 (Rodriguez, Chapter 307, Statutes of 2024) prohibits a person or entity from manufacturing, selling, distributing, delivering, holding, or offering for sale in commerce in this state a wearable personal flotation device that is not approved by the USCG.

- 3) *Puddle Jumper vs swim vest.* AB 2146 defines a “wearable personal flotation device” as a lifejacket, puddle jumper, water wings, or other flotation device designed to be worn or attached to the body of an infant or child. A swim vest is a flotation device for toddlers and small children that helps them stay afloat and build confidence when learning how to swim. Consumer Reports states that a Puddle Jumper is a type of swim vest with connected arm and chest flotation components, and are designed as buoyancy aids for infants and small children to help them stay afloat and maintain an upright position in the water. While Puddle Jumpers is the original brand name trademarked by Bestway, Inc., similar items on the market exist, such as the Speedo Swim Star. The USCG Maritime Information Exchange Approved Equipment List includes the trademarked Bestway Puddle Jumpers as approved for use as a personal flotation device in, on, or near the water. According to the author, removing the trademark name from the definition of “wearable personal flotation device” would avoid unnecessary scrutiny on the brand Puddle Jumpers, whilst still capturing the product within the term “swim vest.”

**SUPPORT AND OPPOSITION:**

**Support:** None received.

**Oppose:** None received.

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