

Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

March 2, 2015

Dear Honorable Members of the Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

We, the undersigned health care systems, know that exposure to toxic chemicals has real consequences for the health of Oregonians. Our doctors treat toddlers poisoned from ingesting lead-laced paint flakes: even a little lead can make children slower learners and lead to other permanent health effects. Emergency room staff see more patients suffering asthma attacks when pollution in the air is elevated. And we are alarmed by the increasing incidence of certain cancers, neurodegenerative disorders, and asthma. Genetics cannot explain the dramatic increases in prevalence over such a short time. Environmental factors—including toxic chemicals—contribute to these trends.

Current federal and state laws do not adequately protect human health from toxic chemicals. As health care institutions, we are financially burdened by this lack of oversight. We therefore support public policies to address the shortcomings of the toxic chemicals management system.

One immediate policy fix that can be adopted at the state level is in front of you—the Toxic-Free Kids Act. This bill would require manufacturers of children’s products to disclose whether their products contain certain chemicals of concern and take steps to phase out dangerous chemicals in certain products.

This targeted bill addresses the most vulnerable age group, children, whose delicate developmental processes are easily disrupted. For example, if cells in the developing brain are harmed by exposure to mercury, lead, or solvents—or if important nerve connections fail to form—the child will likely suffer permanent and irreversible neurobehavioral dysfunction.

The patients we serve—and all Oregonians—would benefit from public policies to reduce exposure to harmful chemicals. Many health impacts and associated health care costs could be reduced. Please support the Toxic-Free Kids Act.

Dr. Joe Robertson
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