



Oregon
Environmental
Council
It's Your Oregon

222 NW Davis Street
Suite 309
Portland, OR 97209-3900
www.oeconline.org

Testimony before House Health Care Committee on HB 4123

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**Renee Hackenmiller-Paradis, PhD, MPH
Environmental Health Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We bring Oregonians together for a healthy environment.

The Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) **supports HB 4123** to designate a list of high priority chemicals of concern for children's health and have the Oregon Health Authority collect data on the presence of these designated chemicals as ingredients in children's products sold in Oregon.

HB 4123 is smart public health policy that provides OHA with the necessary tools to effectively protect the health of Oregonians by reducing exposures to hazardous substances that may be encountered by children everyday.

Chronic disease linked to environmental factors takes a \$1.5 billion toll on Oregon.

In 2010, the [president's cancer panel](#) confirmed that toxic chemical exposure is an important risk factor for cancer. In 2007, cancer cost Oregon \$2.6 billion in health care, lost productivity and diminished earning potential. Toxic exposure is also a risk factor for birth defects (\$2.8M/year cost to Oregon) and neurobehavioral disorders (\$187.1M/year). Preventable exposures in early childhood create risk for disease later in life.

Chemicals linked to disease are found in consumer products and in our bodies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) biomonitoring studies regularly find several hundred toxic chemicals in our bodies. According to the CDC, sources of exposure include "using products with chemicals in them or products stored in containers made with the chemicals." Yet chemical ingredient information is not fully disclosed to consumers or health officials.

Early childhood is the most critical period for preventing toxic exposure.

The brain and body are most vulnerable to chemical exposure during critical windows of development, in utero through adolescence. These exposures can be a significant risk factor for chronic disease later in life. CDC biomonitoring studies have found higher concentrations of toxic chemicals in the youngest age groups.

Infants and children are at greatest risk

We know from scientific studies that chemicals don't always stay put in the products in which they are used. Studies from the CDC confirm that hundreds of chemicals get into our bodies. The natural habits of children—being on the floor; putting everything in their hands straight into their mouths; gumming, sucking and teething behaviors—these all contribute to children having higher exposures to potential harmful chemicals. In addition, the immature metabolism of children means that their bodies are often less able to remove harmful substances from their bodies.

In the last two decades, we've seen significant increases in the occurrence of cancer, including all childhood cancers. There is no doubt that one effective tool to prevent childhood cancer—and some of the cancers that occur later in life—is to eliminate exposure to cancer-causing substances. We can have the greatest impact on improving our population's health if we address the exposures that occur when people are most vulnerable: in infancy and childhood.

But first, we must understand where, when, and how exposures to potentially harmful chemicals occur. That will allow us to prioritize exposure reduction efforts and focus limited resources on interventions that can result in the greatest improvements to our children's health.

The information obtained through HB 4123 provides data to OHA that could be used to determine which children's products are of concern, fully assess potential exposure pathways for a prioritized list of chemicals, and advance our scientific understanding of the contribution that these exposures are making to the health challenges we face.

Specifically, HB 4123 does the following:

- Designates a “High Priority Chemicals of Concern for Children’s Health” list.
 - This list is the overlap of Oregon’s Department of Environmental Quality focus list of toxic chemicals and Washington’s “Chemicals of High Concern for Children”.
- Publishes this list on the Oregon Health Authorities website with information on potential health impacts of exposure.
- Allows 18 months for manufacturers of children’s products sold in Oregon to disclose chemical information on those products to the Oregon Health Authority.
- Authorizes the Oregon Health Authority to receive and share information about chemical ingredients with other states, advancing knowledge about the impact of toxics exposure from children’s products. This includes participation in the Interstate Chemical Clearinghouse.
 - The Interstate Chemicals Clearinghouse (IC2) is an association of state, local, and tribal governments that promotes a clean environment, healthy communities, and a vital economy through the development and use of safer chemicals and products.
<http://www.newmoa.org/prevention/ic2/about/factsheet.cfm>

States take the lead to reduce health risk.

In 2009, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) acknowledged that outdated

chemical laws don't protect consumers from harmful exposures to chemicals in everyday products. The President's Cancer Panel includes state governments among those responsible for setting "tangible goals for reducing toxic environmental exposures implicated in cancer causation." The same experts recommend information sharing as a "bedrock component of the environmental health regulatory system."

With federal action stalled, Washington, Maine, Minnesota and California have passed laws to identify and provide information on chemicals that pose a risk to health in consumer products. The information collected through HB 4123 can help OHA gain a better understanding of what chemicals are in the products used by children and help to evaluate whether or not there is a hazard and, if so, what could be done about it.

The Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) urges you to support HB 4123 as a step toward reducing preventable exposures to toxic chemicals and improving the health of all Oregonians.