



May 13, 2013

Co-Chairs Bates and Nathanson and members of the Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Human Services,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today – the day after Mother’s Day which feels appropriate for this bill. My name is Lisa Frack and I am the Communications Director at Family Forward Oregon and a parent of two children: a 7-year-old girl and a 10-year-old boy.

Family Forward Oregon is a 501(c)(4) charitable organization that advocates for more family-friendly, forward-thinking approaches to work and family in our state. We have approximately 1,600 supporters statewide.

Family Forward Oregon supports HB 3162. Naturally parents want to do all they can to keep their children safe and healthy. But there is no way of knowing which products are safe for our children to use, and which may contain chemicals that could harm their health. How do we protect our children from unknown hazards?

The current system of chemical regulation in our country and state has left Oregon’s children and families unnecessarily exposed to toxic chemicals in unavoidable everyday products like car seats, mattresses, and toys that routinely go in their mouths. Parents should not have to be trained chemists to know which products are safe to bring into their homes. We know from the experience of BPA that even when parents have all the information, it is sometimes still not enough to ensure that everyone can make safe buying choices, especially when that information doesn’t reach everyone equally.

We simply have to do a better job of determining which products are safe and where we can eliminate exposures to protect our children’s health. In the clear absence of federal action, what we really need is action from our state health officials to identify and evaluate these hazards and require safer alternatives. Parents should be able to go into any store in Oregon to purchase a children’s product and know that the contents will not harm our children. We should be able trust that our government is fulfilling its very basic role of protecting its residents’ health from preventable harm.

HB 3162 puts us on the right path and enables us to trust that the products we buy to feed, care for and entertain our children are not harming their health. HB 3162 is a smart solution that will take the burden off of parents by removing the highest priority chemicals of concern from Oregon’s shelves – where they don’t belong. This legislation protects our children and families from preventable health problems, particularly those that affect young children and developing babies, whose developing bodies are more vulnerable to toxic exposures – and whose little hands put more things in their mouths!!

Family Forward Oregon - and I, an Oregon parent who still spends too much time trying to dodge unsafe products - urge you to support HB 3162. We strongly support its passage and thank the distinguished members of the committee for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Frack, Communications Director
Family Forward Oregon