

March 20, 2013

To: Chair Mitch Greenlick and members of the House Health Care Committee:

The Oregon League of Minority Voters promotes respect for all individuals and the empowerment of communities to participate in decision-making. As Executive Director, I believe that this mission includes respect for every individual's right to good health, and empowerment to make decisions that support good health.

For this reason, the Oregon League of Minority Voters endorses HB 3162, the Toxics Disclosure for Healthy Kids Act.

As former EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson said in 2009, our current regulatory system does not "provide the protection against chemical risks that the public rightfully expects."

When chemicals of known concern in everyday products are undisclosed, health advocates and authorities are stripped of their ability to make precautionary choices for the people they serve. When toxic chemicals are replaced with equally harmful alternatives, we perpetuate the powerlessness of consumers, health providers and governmental officials to protect the health of our people.

Many health burdens fall most heavily on minority communities in Oregon. From poverty to air pollution to inequity of public services, minority communities face social and environmental obstacles to good health.

Minority communities experience greater rates of chronic health challenges including asthma, some cancers, diabetes and poor birth outcomes. We also know that studies show that minority patients show greater body burdens of chemicals linked to these diseases, including phthalates, flame retardants and bisphenol A. We must strive to address all health disparities, and chemicals in consumer products should not escape our attention.

Personal responsibility is important to good health. But when environmental and social forces stack the deck against good health, we are not operating a system founded in respect and empowerment. By requiring the disclosure of known toxic chemicals as they occur in products made for people at the age that we are most vulnerable, our health authority can begin to gather the data that will allow them to support public health. And by ensuring that alternatives to these toxics are safer, we stop perpetuating the ignorance and obfuscation that leads to injustice.

I urge Oregon to pass HB 3162, The Toxics Disclosure For Healthy Kids Act.

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