

ECUMENICAL MINISTRIES *of* OREGON

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Written Testimony in Support of SB 1569 to the Health Care and Human Services Committee From Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns Submitted February 3, 2014

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) is a statewide organization that brings together diverse communities of faith to learn, serve and advocate for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. EMO has 16 member denominations and 140 member organizations, congregations and interfaith partners. EMO's Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns' (INEC) mission is to connect, inform, inspire and empower people, congregations and religious institutions to work for justice and the care and renewal of earth. It includes over 1200 individuals and 550 congregations.

For many years INEC has educated the faith community on the dangers of toxics to human health and the environment and advocated for policies that address toxic contamination at the national, state and local level. An important first step is to know what carcinogens, endocrine disruptors and other harmful chemicals are in the products our children are exposed to. SB 1569 represents this vital next step for Oregon. As soon as possible, we need to replace these chemicals with safer alternatives. This action will reduce health care costs, now and in the future. EMO and INEC strongly support SB 1569.

Faith community support for better chemical policy is robust. In 2011 and 12, 164 Oregon faith leaders signed on to the "Interfaith Statement for Chemical Policy Reform" and 175 signed the "Grandparents Faith Letter on Toxics and Future Generations." The first letter, citing four core religious values, includes the following policy recommendations especially pertinent to SB 1569: 1) Hold companies accountable for demonstrating that chemicals are safe; 2) Invest in research to understand and protect children's health from chemical harm and 3) Provide chemical and health safety information to workers and the public.

The Grandparents letter expresses deep concern about the rising rates of diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's type II diabetes and heart disease that have links to toxic chemical exposure early in life. The letter asks members of Congress to "consider the health of all people today, future generations and the sacredness of all life on earth" by passing policies that ensure "1) chemicals are safe before they end up in the products we all use and ultimately migrate into our bodies and the environment, 2) swiftly remove the most dangerous chemicals when safer alternative exist, and 3) reduce the disproportionate burden of burden of toxic chemicals born by low-income communities and communities of color, and in particular by all of God's children."

Also, a 2010 statement with Oregon signers, "Christian Principles for a Healthy Body and Spirit," calls for the requirement that "companies and government regulatory agencies to inform people about chemicals that are in consumer products through "right to know" and a published chemical database so that individuals and state regulatory agencies can make sound decisions for their families, their congregations and their communities."

One of the most important legacies you will leave for Oregon's children this session is passage of a strong toxics disclosure bill. We strongly support the passage of SB 1569 and thank the distinguished members of the committee for your consideration.

Jenny Holmes, EMO Environmental Ministries Director