

Testimony on Senate Bill 1569
Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee
February 4, 2014

Dr. John Pearson

Thank you Chair Monnes Anderson and members of the Senate Health Care and Human Services Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is John Pearson, and I am a retired pediatrician. I was head of the pediatric department at Kaiser Permanente and am pleased to see that they have endorsed this legislation.

Oregon's children are facing an increasingly challenging time just making it through what should be normal stages of growth and development. Pediatricians are seeing increasing incidences of childhood obesity, early onset puberty, learning disabilities, and other chronic health problems. Children as young as eleven are being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and we know that hormone disruption is speeding up the development of this terrible disease. Many of the health problems that pediatricians are seeing in increasing numbers have been linked with exposure to toxic chemicals.

It greatly disturbs me that many chemicals known to be carcinogenic or hormone-disrupting are found in products children use everyday – from school supplies to toys to sunscreens formulated for kids. For example, many vinyl backpacks and lunch boxes contain phthalates, which have been linked to an array of developmental and reproductive health effects. And chemicals that release formaldehyde

—which is linked with respiratory symptoms and cancer—are routinely added to children’s shampoos, bubble baths and soaps.

Children should not be exposed to toxic chemicals. Chemicals impact developing brains and bodies more severely than adult bodies; children breathe and ingest more pound per pound than adults; and children’s natural behaviors (like the fact that babies and toddlers put everything they possibly can into their mouths) mean that they transfer more pollution into their bodies.

I swore an oath when I became a doctor to do everything I could to protect people’s health. I see toxic chemicals in products as putting children’s lives in danger unnecessarily. I encourage you to pass Senate Bill 1569 to help combat this problem.

We must ensure our children are playing with, wearing and using the safest products on the market.