

**WILLAMETTE**

THE FIRST UNIVERSITY IN THE WEST

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To: Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Attn: Committee Administrator, Samantha Koopman

I urge your Committee to **please support the Toxic Free Kids Act, SB 478**. I am offering the following written testimony, as my schedule precludes my testifying in person.

As a physiological psychologist, I have written and lectured on the vulnerability of children's brains to the hazards associated with chemical exposures. Brain development depends on chemical events, and it has become increasingly clear over the past decade that various substances including mercury, additives including phthalates in toys and other consumer products, pesticides, and fire retardants can interfere with normal biochemical processes underlying brain development. Potential impacts include developmental disabilities such as attention deficit disorders (ADD/ADHD), learning, memory and reading impairments, and more severe outcomes such as autism or mental retardation.

Ideally, we in Oregon and the remainder of the U.S. would be adopting a Precautionary Approach, such as that implemented in several European countries, where products with the *potential* for causing harm to human health are not marketed until they've been proven safe. Instead, we seem to favor the "innocent until proven guilty" approach -- products are allowed to be marketed until they've been proven harmful. Unfortunately this practice, by definition, is too little, too late; it literally puts millions of our children at risk for irreversible brain damage, and lost intellectual and social potential.

SB 478 is an important first step in addressing these issues. It would enable science-based prioritization of chemicals of concern; require manufacturers to notify public health officials when their products contain these chemicals; and begin progress towards phasing out those chemicals in favor of safer alternatives.

I hope that Oregon's families can count on you to take these first steps towards improving protections for our children. Thank you for your service to our community.

Sincerely,

Susan M. Koger, Ph.D.

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