

## Toxic Free Kids Act SB 478

### Details

- **What:** The Toxic Free Kids Act requires children's product manufacturers to notify health officials when their products, such as toys and car seats, contain "High priority chemicals of concern for children's health"— aka hazardous chemicals – and replace certain chemicals with safer alternatives within six years.
- **Why:** We want our communities to be protected from unnecessary hazards, particularly those that affect children and fetuses, who are more vulnerable to toxic exposures.
- **When:** The Oregon Legislature has considered similar laws since 2012, and the bill concept has earned strong bipartisan support in every session since. It's time to bring the bill to a vote—and to pass it.
- **Who:** The Toxic-Free Kids Act of 2015, SB 478, is sponsored by Alissa Keny-Guyer (D), David Gomberg (D), Mark Johnson (R ) and on the senate side Chris Edwards (D), Sen. Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, MD (D) and Sen. Sara Gelser (D).

### Talking points

**Toxic chemicals are in our homes and bodies:** We know that chemicals known to be carcinogens and hormone disruptors are found in products that we use every day. These toxic chemicals include formaldehyde in fabric, arsenic in baby clothes, hormone disruptors in plastic toys. Extensive health studies over the past 30 years have demonstrated that a range of chemicals are contributing to increases in childhood cancers (up more than 20% since 1975), breast cancer, infertility in women and men, asthma, and other chronic disease. In 2010, the President's Cancer Panel<sup>3</sup> confirmed that toxic chemical exposure is an important risk factor for cancer. The Panel summarized its investigation into evidence linking environmental chemicals to various kinds of cancer, and concluded that, despite remaining uncertainties, we know enough to act to reduce exposures to chemicals of concern.

**Infants and children are at greatest risk:** CDC biomonitoring studies have found higher concentrations of many toxic chemicals in the youngest age groups. The natural habits of children—being on the floor; putting everything in their hands straight into their mouths; gumming, sucking and teething behaviors—these all contribute to children having higher exposures to potential harmful chemicals. By tracking products that children touch, put in their mouths and inhale, we can identify and eliminate the greatest potential for direct exposure.

**A lifetime of health starts at birth:** Early childhood is a critical period for preventing chronic disease. The immature metabolism of children means that their bodies are often less able to remove harmful substances from their bodies. In addition, the brain and body are most vulnerable to chemical exposure during critical windows of development, in utero through adolescence. These exposures can be a significant risk factor for chronic disease later in life.

**These chemicals exist in children's products:** Our neighbors in Washington State already require disclosure of "chemicals of concern" in children's products. In 2013, manufacturers reported these hazardous chemicals in thousands of products including 519 toys, 198 baby products, more than 2,000 clothing and footwear items. Chemicals intentionally used in production include well-known toxics such as mercury, arsenic, toluene and toxic flame retardants.

**Toxic exposure is costly:** The yearly cost of just four childhood health problems linked to environmental exposures in the U.S. — lead poisoning, asthma, cancer, and developmental disabilities — is more than \$54 billion.

**Nearly 80 groups, including the health care community have endorsed the measure:** Among endorsees of the bill in 2014 were Moda Health, Legacy Health, Kaiser Permanente, AFSCME Oregon and Main Street Alliance of Oregon.

**It's our job at Multnomah County Health Department to protect and promote the health of our community:** We cannot protect residents from health hazards unless we know what they are and where they exist. We need to assure individuals, families and communities gain greater control over the factors that influence their health. By creating a system to identify, collect and share information about toxic chemicals, this bill would be a tremendous step in the right direction.