

Health Department



To: Chair Edwards and Members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Jae Douglas, Director, Multnomah County Environmental Health

Date: March 2, 2015

RE: Support of Senate Bill 478

Multnomah County Health Department strongly supports SB 478.

From the cleanup of the Willamette River a half-century ago to the recent passage of legislation regulating mercury and toxic flame retardants, Oregonians have consistently been in the forefront of efforts to reduce pollution and toxics and to create a healthier environment. It is our job at Multnomah County to protect community members' health, especially that of our children, from toxics in our products. Senate Bill 478 is a good first step in protecting Oregon's children from products that may harm them.

Toxic exposure is one of the preventable risk factors for chronic health problems, including asthma, cancer, diabetes and birth outcomes. If we do one thing to address the impact of chemical exposure, it should be to protect our children. Because children's bodies are growing and developing, they are especially vulnerable to the effects of toxic chemicals. Current regulation of chemicals in children's toys and other products does not sufficiently protect them from health impacts associated with exposure to all toxic chemicals. Public disclosure of the toxic chemicals in a product and their potential impact is both a responsibility of the industry and a first step that can lead to encouraging manufacturers to reformulate their products with non-toxic chemicals.

Put simply, we cannot protect residents from health hazards unless we know what they are and where they exist. By creating a system to identify, collect and share information about toxic chemicals and asking companies to phase out these products, is a significant step in the right direction. In addition, passage of this bill would send a message to manufactures that we're open for business in our state – so long as it's done in a way that supports the health and well being of all Oregonians.

As Environmental Health Director for Multnomah County Health Department, I'm proud to stand with the advocates behind this important legislation. It is all of our responsibility to create a healthier Oregon for future generations.