

Andy Harris, MD
3969 N. Overlook Blvd
Portland, OR 97227
andyharrismd@comcast.net

Re: Hearing on SB 478, Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources, 3-2-15

Chair Edwards, Members of the Committee:

My name is Andy Harris. I am a physician and assistant professor at OHSU, where I direct the Global Health Center. I'm here to testify for SB 478 on behalf of Oregon Center for Christian Voices and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Why is a Christian non-profit organization advocating for this bill? Because we represent the voice of vulnerable and marginalized people, whose voices often are not heard at the State Capitol. We advocate for economic and social justice. Young children, who are among the most vulnerable of our citizens, are unable to speak on their own behalf, and our purpose is to advocate for their health and well-being.

Children in our society live in a toxic soup of chemicals, some of them innocuous but others cause cancer, asthma, and learning & developmental disabilities. Toxics Free Kids Act (SB 478) directs the Oregon Health Authority to identify the most toxic chemicals and requires their replacement with safer alternatives.

As a physician, it seems incredible that manufacturers knowingly put toxic chemicals in products intended for children. Such chemicals include arsenic, cadmium, mercury, phthalates, benzene and formaldehyde, among the most toxic known substances.

Benzene and formaldehyde are linked to cancer, endocrine disruption and developmental delays. Formaldehyde is classified as a human carcinogen by the World Health Organization (WHO) and as a probable human carcinogen by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Formaldehyde has been found to be genotoxic, meaning it can alter genes by causing chromosomal damage.

It hardly takes a physician to tell you that formaldehyde and other toxic chemicals should not be put in pacifiers, shampoos and plastic toys, destined for the mouths of young children. SB 478 will identify the use of such toxics in various children's products, and will require their replacement within 6 years for large manufacturers (8 years for smaller companies).

Oregon Center for Christian Voices and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility urge you to consider the health and safety of Oregon's most vulnerable population, our children, and vote for SB 478. Thank you for your time and attention.

Andy Harris, MD
Oregon Center for Christian Voices, Board of Directors
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Advisory Board