

Testimony in Support of SB 478 (High Priority Chemicals of Concern for Children's Health)

Submitted by Bethany Wofford, March 2, 2015

During pregnancy hormones and emotions are elevated, making a trip down the dark rabbit hole of internet discussion on toxicity in children's products a torturous experience for expectant parents. I had heard about the problem with BPA in sippy cups and naively thought that was all I needed to worry about – until it was time to buy a mattress for my daughter's crib, a place she would be spending 12-15 hours a day (hopefully!) sleeping for the next several years. It had never occurred to me that I would need to research mattresses, changing pads, clothes, toys and furniture exhaustively because I just assumed that children's products were safe! Sadly, profits are put before safety and health concerns and we need our government to help protect my daughter and the children of Oregon from chemicals that can harm their growth and development.

Just this week my daughter and I were shopping at a big-box store and as soon as we stepped inside she was magnetically drawn to a section of brightly colored toys strategically placed at her eye level and advertised for \$1. She grabbed a bright blue egg from the Easter section: "I NEED this egg!" She's 2, all trips to the store now involve a constant chorus of "I NEED this!" I examined the egg. It was filled with a glittery blue goo of some kind, ready to be removed and squished between her fat little fingers and – inevitably – end up in her mouth, where all things go. "Oh, I don't think you need this. I think it's going to give you cancer". I said glibly (remember she's 2!). We grabbed some stickers and turned to move on. Another woman was laughing at my somewhat tongue in cheek comment. She said "Yeah, I just tried on some sunglasses, but then I thought – these are MADE of cancer! And I put them back". She gazed at my daughter's beaming face and continued, "It's hard being a parent, isn't it?"

Yes! Yes, it is hard being a parent. Everyone knows that but I think it is worth saying. Being a parent requires a constant barrage of anxiety-provoking decisions about the safety of the world – what they eat, what they watch, who they play with, where they play, which school they go to, crossing the street, riding a bike – the opportunity for carnage seems endless sometimes. We have to fight these fights every day, and any action we can take to make those decisions a little easier or better informed is desperately needed by parents. We should at least be able to snuggle our babies into their jammies at the end of the day and lay them on their mattress knowing that they aren't being exposed to toxic chemicals in their sleep – I don't think that is too much to ask.

I also think there is another part of this problem that is starting to play out that is demonstrated in my shopping story. Both the other woman in this story and I both put our items back and didn't buy them. Consumers are starting to catch on to this problem and act accordingly. Manufacturers are sure to have a knee jerk reaction to this bill, but in my opinion they are looking at this from the wrong angle. It's time for the corporations who are making money from children's items to respect the desire of parents to protect their children, and to do the right thing. Unfortunately because of profit motives they NEED legislation like this to help push them in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and I urge you all to pass this legislation into law.