

**Testimony of Susan Beal before the Oregon House of Representatives
Health Care Committee in support of the Toxic Free Kids Act (SB 478)
March 2, 2015**

My name is Susan Beal and I'm the mother of two young children here in Oregon. I passionately believe that dangerous, toxic chemicals don't belong in the hands of our babies and children, just when they are at greatest risk of lasting harm to their health. If a manufacturer is using a carcinogen like formaldehyde in children's clothes or brain-damaging cadmium and mercury in toys, it should not be a secret. I do my best to protect my kids from as many of these "chemicals of concern" as I can.

But parents shouldn't have to be researchers or chemists to avoid exposing our children to toxic chemicals—or to reward the great companies who don't use toxics in the first place. The state of Oregon, and its health and science experts, should be helping to ensure that our health is not at risk from everyday products. As we all know, our neighbor, Washington State, passed a law requiring large manufacturers to disclose to state authorities if they're using any of 66 toxic, disruptive chemicals in products for kids, making it even easier for our own great state to follow suit with a similar law - the Toxic Free Kids Act.

I'm amazed by how our understanding of chemicals and how they affect us, especially babies and children, has deepened just in my own lifetime. I was born in a hospital in North Carolina in 1974 that permitted smoking anywhere in the facility that didn't have an oxygen tent in use. More than thirty years later, both my own children were born here in Oregon, at Providence Portland Medical Center, where smoking is restricted to an isolated part of the parking lot, far from the babies and sick patients most vulnerable to it.

When I was eight months pregnant with my second child, I changed part of our basement into a playroom for my daughter and bought chalkboard paint so she could draw all over the walls during a long gray Oregon winter with a new baby at home. I can't tell you how reassuring it is to know that no matter what brand or type I chose from the huge selection at Powell Paint (or at any other hardware store), all of them were free of the lead that could poison my bright two-year-old or the baby we hadn't even met yet.

But as a mother and a consumer, I can't be sure that the toys and products made and marketed for children are as safe as house paint. There are some products I buy every week, and others I've never bought once in nearly five years as a mother, but I am asking for your support to label the ones that do include dangerous chemicals, so that parents can feel as confident on the baby-products and toy aisles as they do at a paint store. It really sounds crazy when you think about it that way – our paint is better regulated and labeled than the toys our children play with. Please, let's update our broken, outdated chemical-regulation

laws, written in and for the era when you could smoke anywhere in a hospital, with this important step forward.

My deepest thanks to Representatives Alissa Keny-Guyer ,David Gomberg, and Mark Johnson, and Senators Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, MD, Chris Edwards, and Sara Gelser for sponsoring this bill. I appreciate their bipartisan collaboration on this issue, and I urge you to support their important efforts on behalf of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. Thank you all so much for your time today.

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