

Dear Chair Fagan, Vice-Chairs Buehler and Rayfield and Members of the House Committee on Consumer Protection and Government Efficiency.

For the record, my name is Leslie Byster, and I live at 204 NE 79<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Portland, Oregon. I am speaking to you on behalf of myself and other families with children in Oregon public schools. My house is adjacent to a crematorium and near an elementary school.

Many public schools are now located in commercial use zones. Unfortunately there is little or no oversight of industries which emit toxic chemicals in residential neighborhoods or near schools. This issue came to my attention recently when a crematorium located next to homes and less than 75 yards from an elementary school started operating. Fortunately, there is a chance to correct this oversight with House Bill 3056.

There are many chemicals emitted through the cremation process, including sulfur-laden compounds, lead, arsenic, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, chlorinated dioxins, and furans and mercury. Several are carcinogenic and are known to exacerbate chronic conditions such as asthma.

The US EPA has stated that there is no safe level of exposure for many of these toxic chemicals. Even in low doses, they can damage nervous tissues, the kidneys, the brain and cause death. Studies have linked increases in birth defects to the presence of operating crematoria.

When operating, the crematory incinerator was very loud and its smoke stack spewed black smoke and pungent odors into our community. The odors often lasted hours after a burn was completed. Odors are often the first sign of a danger. Who hasn't been alarmed when they have smelled something burning?

Because of a lack of regulatory oversight and testing, the crematorium was able to operate and release visible black smoke, and toxic chemicals onto the school yard and into the environment. The crematorium's emissions contained particulates which fell on the playground and a garden where community members and students grow vegetables. Because of Portland's temperate climate, the playground and garden are used practically year round. Children, being children, are active. They run, scream, get over-excited and breathe harder thereby increasing the possibility for bio-accumulation of these poisons over time.

The State Mortuary and Cemetery Board should have the authority to approve and disapprove crematoria; especially they impact public health and the safety of children in Oregon. The bill addresses points to consider when granting a permit, explicitly, the proximity of a crematorium to schools and any place where children are likely to congregate. A school, playground and community garden certainly fit those criteria.

Where children are concerned we should follow the Precautionary Principle which states Do No Harm. It is not necessary to wait for scientific certainty before enacting protective measures. Across the United States, cities are implementing the precautionary principle as the basis for their environmental policy because there is a social responsibility to protect the public, especially our children from exposure to harm.

We should not allow the operation of crematoria where children are present, in residential neighborhoods and schools. Be brave, be bold. Support this health protective measure because the health of the children

in our communities is at risk. Thank you for listening to me and thank you to Representative Alissa Keny-Guyer for bringing this forward. We are counting on the committee to protect the health of our children and community.