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HB 3478: Protecting Oregon's wildlife and waterways by phasing in a state-wide ban on the manufacture and sale of personal care products and over-the-counter drugs that contain plastic microbeads.

Issue:

Some popular facial cleansers and other personal care products can contain thousands of small plastic microbeads in a single container. These microbeads are small enough to bypass sewer and water treatment filters, have the potential to absorb toxins, and could harm fish and other wildlife.

Solution:

Beyond the positive environmental impact of HB 3478, this bill is also positive for local municipalities. When my staff toured the waste water treatment plant in my city of Gresham, representatives from the treatment plant gave their support for the bill citing that it will save the city and rate payers money. By addressing this issue at the front end, preventing the entrance of these beads into treatment plants, the city does not need to use costly and time consuming measures to clean the equipment or discover ways to filter the microbeads out.

HB 3478 phases in the prohibition on manufacture and sale of personal care products and over-the-counter drugs that contain synthetic plastic micro-beads with full implementation by December 31st, 2019. This timeframe ensures manufacturers of all sizes have adequate time to make adjustments and meet all requirements of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Amendments:

During the public hearing, the committee heard concerns about various definitions within the bill and the desire to ensure that the language is thorough and does not allow for manufacturers to find loopholes. These loopholes would allow certain plastics or materials that may not in fact be biodegradable in marine environments to be used.

Various amendments were drafted to address these concerns, and they have been combined into the -6 amendment. The -6 amendment clarifies the definition of "Personal care product", defines the term "Plastic" and removes the reference to biodegradable to ensure that this ban will be applied to the few plastics deemed "biodegradable" in certain, extreme, environments.

Summary:

This bill is a simple yet important step that will have positive impacts for fish, wildlife, and waterways. Additionally, it will provide important costs savings to cities and ratepayers who would otherwise bear the burden of paying for costly filtering and cleaning. The amendments address concerns from environmentalists that loopholes were left open and since, this bill has earned support from key environmental voices in Oregon.