

To: Chair Helm and members of the House Energy and Environment  
From: Lisa Arkin, Executive Director, Beyond Toxics  
Subject: In support of HB 2269 – DEQ Budget for Cleaner Air Oregon  
Date: March 27, 2017

Thank you very much for holding this hearing for HB 2269, a bill that provides Oregonians with an opportunity to improve air quality and public health. My name is Lisa Arkin and I represent Beyond Toxics, a statewide environmental health non-profit. I am also an appointed member of the Governor's Cleaner Air Oregon Policy Advisory Group. Beyond Toxics represents over 4,000 members who wholeheartedly support HB 2269. The passage of this bill will allow the DEQ, Oregon's environmental regulatory agency, to receive the resources it needs to carry out its mission.

In 2016, Governor Brown established the Cleaner Air Oregon process in order to carry out her mandate to regulate air quality based on criteria that will improve public health. The modest fees requested for this work laid out in HB 2269 are necessary to enable the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to comply with the Governor's mandate.

The DEQ has been historically underfunded. For example, the agency is unable to process air discharge permits in a timely fashion. Old and outdated permits are left in place despite the need for review for monitoring and compliance. Nearby neighbors are faced with a lack of agency response to their valid health concerns. They turn bitter and focus the community's frustration on agency staff. In this scenario everyone loses, both government and citizen.

Industry prefers this status quo because it pits community against agency, while keeping outdated policies on the books and allowing regulatory permits to escape scrutiny and correction.

HB 2269 is the Legislature's opportunity to come through on its promise to reduce toxic exposures and improve community health. Let's see to it that our state environmental protection agency is equipped to gather and act upon the best data to reduce environmental pollution.

Interestingly, Oregon prides itself on having a number of innovative environmental programs. One such example is the 1980's Toxics Use and Hazardous Waste Reduction Act. Once regarded as a "landmark" law, this well-intentioned program has suffered from an absence of funding and a lack of industry buy-in. Now we have Cleaner Air Oregon offering the bright promise of bringing Oregon's air regulatory system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Like other "innovative programs," Cleaner Air Oregon will languish without funding and legislative commitment.

HB 2269 could make more efficient use of DEQ's scarce resources by helping that agency identify amounts, types and location of toxic emission sources and help reduce pollution. The end result is better public health outcomes for all.

Please pass HB 2269 with your highest recommendations for full funding for the DEQ's air regulatory programs. We urge legislators to be responsive to communities overburdened by toxic pollution and give the DEQ the resources they require to serve those communities.