

Chairman Dembrow and members of the Senate Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

My name is Andy Harris. I live in North Portland and am testifying for SB 995 on behalf of Oregon Center for Christian Voices and Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility.

In 1999 I served on the Governor's Task Force on Hazardous Substances and Toxics Right-To-Know. This bipartisan task made recommendations to the 2000 Oregon Legislature, none of which were ever implemented or funded. So here we are 18 years later still trying to ascertain what toxic chemicals are in the air we breathe.

The heavy-metals lead, chromium, arsenic, nickel, cadmium and cobalt have been identified in Portland near point sources such as Bullseye Glass and Precision Castparts Corp. The release of toxics from Portland manufacturing firms underscores the need to monitor full materials balance reporting of toxic chemicals.

As a physician I know that even minute amounts of toxic chemicals can cause serious and permanent damage to developing brains, endocrine and immune systems in infants and young children. Many toxic chemicals readily cross the placenta and can damage a fetus at critical stages of development. Low-income people and communities of color have higher health risks from industrial air pollution because they are more likely to live in close proximity to manufacturing plants. State agencies and local communities have an obligation to know what toxics are being discharged into the air, ground, water and waste.

Every major religion calls on its followers to care for the most vulnerable among us. Oregon Center for Christian Voices speaks for the poor, hungry and homeless, but also for those who are most impacted by pollution - children, the elderly, and people living near industrial pollution. The irony is that the people who are most affected cannot hire lobbyists and seldom get to voice their concerns. Particularly at a time of drastic EPA budget cuts, states must do everything possible to monitor and regulate toxic pollutants.

Jeremiah Chap. 2:7 reads, "And I brought you into a plentiful land to enjoy its fruits and its good things. But when you came in, you defiled my land and made my heritage an abomination." In this day and age and with the resources available we can do better.

Let's not gamble with our children's health. Senate Bill 995 would provide a data base of toxic chemicals so that DEQ can zero in on potential toxic emission sources. I urge you to support SB 995.

Thank you.

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