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To: [SENRR Exhibits](#)
Subject: Margaret E. Davis testimony for SB871, Environment and Natural Resources Committee, 4/10/2017
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Margaret E. Davis testimony for SB871, Environment and Natural Resources Committee, 4/10/2017



I'm Margaret Davis, a Portland resident who works with the grassroots group United Neighborhoods for Reform. Thank you for this bill.

The above picture shows a demolition at 3558 NE 44th Ave., two doors away from where I lived. If you also lived nearby, your home, any play structure or barbecue in your yard, and your vegetable garden would be covered in the dust emanating from this demolition. It was a breezy day so clouds of the dust billowed across the block. Federal studies have shown this toxic dust travels up to 400 feet. The house was under 600 square feet, but the dust kept coming all day long and continued for several days thereafter.

What was in that dust? No one knows. We do know that it is nearly certain that any home built before 1978, as this one was, contained many coats of lead paint. Each can of lead paint contained 15 pounds of lead. Asbestos also could have been part of the toxic clouds.

The health effects of lead and asbestos are well-known, with the Centers for Disease Control stating

that no amount of lead is safe in children. I saw the dust from this demolition coat the swingset my neighbor keeps for her granddaughters. This is one of seven demolitions that have taken place on my block while I've raised my son, now 8 years old. At least a dozen more children also call this block home.

It is bad enough that viable affordable housing was sent to the landfill just so a much more expensive house built with inferior materials and craftsmanship could rise in its place. But the worst part is that this for-profit activity that benefits so few should impact so many, threatening lifelong illness and irreversible damage for anyone unlucky enough to live or breathe within the toxic plume.

It's wrong, and we know it.

This toxic drift launched by mechanical demolition can be avoided. Control techniques have been tested, verified, and required in environmentally minded places across the country. If vacant land instead becomes the site for new construction, all the better in so many ways.

As our elected leaders, you have the opportunity—even the responsibility—to prioritize public health and safety over business interests. Please turn the “may require” provisions of SB871 into “must require” and make these other changes:

- reinstate the civil penalty clause, only with a more meaningful ding, say, an increase from \$5,000 to \$25,000 (\$5,000 likely would just be folded into the pro forma)
- clearly include single-family homes among the demolitions at issue
- ensure the state definition of “demolition” controls at the local level
- require neighbor notification to include properties within 400 feet of a demolition, the distance a fed study found the dust travels, and
- identify a particular agency that would be responsible for enforcement of surveys and abatement for hazmat before demolition of any structure.

Accountability and required abatement will make this effort meaningful to those of us at the ground level, especially in Portland where demolitions occur more than once a day.

Thank you for bringing this bill forward.

4/10/2017

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