

Health Department

May 11, 2017

Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court St. NE - H-174
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2269 - Air Quality

Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Witt and members of the committee; my name is Dr. Paul Lewis, I am the Tri-County Health Officer for Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties and I am a member of the Cleaner Air Oregon Rulemaking Advisory Committee. I am here today on behalf of Multnomah County to voice my strong support for House Bill 2269, which seeks to protect public health and the quality of our air by ensuring that the Department of Environmental Quality has adequate resources to implement updated, health protective rules under the Cleaner Air Oregon permitting program.

Those of us working in public health have known for a long time that the air in many parts of our state is polluted. The Portland Air Toxics Solutions project identified unacceptable levels of several toxic pollutants in our air, and developed recommendations for reduction.¹ Nearly ten years later, many of the high risk pollutants identified in that study have yet to be addressed, and as was realized in Department of Environmental Quality monitoring in early 2016, concentrations of some of the identified toxics were higher than models ever predicted.² The Department of Environmental Quality had failed in its' mission to protect our air- but why?

The sobering answer is that the agency has been plagued by budget and staff reductions guided by industry interests that hinder the ability to implement or enforce more stringent rules. The majority of Oregon air programs currently operate under antiquated minimum federal standards- some of which haven't been updated for nearly 30 years. Under valid operating permits, facilities like Bullseye Glass were legally permitted to emit up to 25 tons of combined air toxics annually. Twenty-five tons of hazardous air pollutants like cadmium, chromium and lead- legally into our neighborhoods. Many states have taken control over air quality and developed programs above and beyond federal requirements. Oregon is far behind and we can no longer stand to have some of the worst air in the nation.³

¹ Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Portland Air Toxics Solutions Committee Report and Recommendations. (2012). Portland, Oregon.

² Donovan, G. H., Jovan, S. E., Gatzolis, D., Burstyn, I., Michael, Y. L., Amacher, M. C., & Monleon, V. J. (2016). Using an epiphytic moss to identify previously unknown sources of atmospheric cadmium pollution. *Science of the Total Environment*, 559, 84-93.

³ United States Environmental Protection Agency. (2015). 2011 National Air Toxics Assessment. Available from <https://www.epa.gov/national-air-toxics-assessment>

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We urge the Legislature to pass House Bill 2269 with full funding for the Department of Environmental Quality to continue to advance the Cleaner Air Oregon process- a directive of the Governor. Concurrent with this support, we also remain vigilant and steadfast in our charge to ensure healthy air for the people, wildlife and environment of Multnomah County, which faces the highest combined exposure to industrial toxics in the state, and is also home to some of the most concentrated areas of vulnerable populations. We have an absolute responsibility to protect the most vulnerable, and by achieving that goal we are in turn protective of all. To that end we will consider all options available for clean air, including but not limited to local control strategies.

This legislation is imperative to protect our air and ensure a sustainable, thriving economy for generations to come.

Thank you for the opportunity to talk to you today. I am happy to take any questions and comments you may have.

Paul Lewis, MD, MPH
Health Officer Multnomah County, Oregon