

**Testimony on Senate Bill 871 before  
the Joint Committee On Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Natural Resources**

**June 26, 2017  
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

**Oregon Environmental Council strongly supports SB 871 to update requirements for lead and asbestos surveys prior to home demolition.**

As an organization that works at the intersection of human health and the environment, Oregon Environmental Council has a strong interest in ensuring that healthful environments where people live, work, play and pray. That includes ensuring that public health authorities manage the persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic materials like lead and asbestos in our old buildings.

We encourage support of SB 871, which makes improvements so that neighbors are better informed of lead and asbestos hazards and protected with greater oversight and enforcement authority to local governments as required.

There is no toxicological or biological safe level of exposure for either asbestos or lead. We now know that even a miniscule amount of asbestos exposure raises the risk of cancer and lung damage. Even the smallest amount of lead in the blood raises the risk of neurological and reproductive harm.

We also know that asbestos and lead do not simply “go away” when a building is demolished. During demolition, both substances may be carried in the air by dust and debris, putting families near a demolition site at risk of exposure. One study of residential demolitions in Baltimore, MD found that lead in dust increased between 24% and 200% on the streets, alleys and sidewalks within 100 meters of a demolition site<sup>i</sup>. And even a month after demolition, the study found some increased levels of lead in neighborhood dust.

Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality estimates that there are 650 residential demolitions a year across the state<sup>ii</sup>. Giving local governments the authority and power to protect citizens from these exposures is a practical public health strategy that will pay off in healthier people and better public health, educational and social outcomes.

**We respectfully encourage support of this bill.**

<sup>i</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16194670>

<sup>ii</sup> <https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2015R1/Downloads/MeasureAnalysisDocument/29174>