



May 15, 2019

RE: Hearing on S.B. 471, May 16, 2019

On behalf of the Enough Project, I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of S.B. 471.

As Director of Advocacy at the Enough Project, I have spent the last five years working with hundreds of activists and companies across the country to promote policies that support transparent, conflict-free minerals sourcing from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

By considering this legislation, the state of Oregon has an opportunity to make a real difference in the global effort to support peace in the DRC. Building on the progress spurred by the Never Again Coalition and the city of Portland, S.B. 471, if passed into law, would make Oregon only the third state in the country with conflict-free minerals legislation in place.

The conflict in the DRC has resulted in the deaths of more than 5.4 million people – making it the deadliest conflict since World War II. Millions have been displaced, citizens continue to be terrorized, and rape is used as a weapon of war. Despite abundant natural resources, the United Nations ranks the DRC among the world's poorest countries per capita.

Conflict minerals have fueled and continue to sustain armed violence in the conflict. Armed groups have generated hundreds of millions of dollars by illegally extracting and smuggling tin, tantalum, and tungsten (the “3Ts”), and gold. They use force and coercion to control mining sites and trading routes, enslave workers, and reap the financial benefits of these lucrative minerals. This money enables the armed groups to purchase large numbers of weapons and continue their campaigns of brutal violence against civilians.

These minerals eventually end up in consumer products such as smart phones and computers. Consumers and the companies they purchase from have the opportunity to contribute to peace in the DRC by making sure that the minerals in their products do not come from areas controlled by armed groups. This requires that companies trace their supply chains and invest in conflict-free programs on the ground in the DRC. We have seen positive momentum in recent years, with the implementation of U.S. federal legislation that requires companies to report on their minerals' origins, and some companies like Apple, Google, and Intel taking proactive action to positively address the issue. Government legislation, corporate efforts, and others reforms have led to a major reduction in the number of 3T conflict mines in eastern DRC. Over 75 percent of the world's smelters for the four minerals have now passed conflict-free audits, and there has been a significant decrease in the number of 3T mines controlled by armed groups in eastern DRC. As of 2016, the International Peace Information Service found that 79 percent of 3T miners surveyed in eastern DRC were working in mines where no armed group involvement had been reported. This is a significant change given that the U.N. Group of Experts stated as recently as 2010 that “in the Kivu provinces, almost every mining deposit [was] controlled by a military group.” While comprehensive action is needed for the DRC, especially in the wake of the country's fiercely contested December 2018 elections, the consumer connection to global supply chains gives the public leverage to affect change on the issue of conflict minerals in particular.

Activism remains an essential component to gain the attention of companies and spur change within industries. Oregon has a long history of being at the forefront of social progress. If Oregon were to pass a conflict-free minerals resolution, it would be joining and strengthening an already prominent call for peace in the DRC that is present in the United States and expanding to Europe, China, and other jurisdictions. At the same time, by becoming one of the first states to make such a public declaration,



Oregon has the opportunity to define itself as a leader in the larger movement. A resolution committing Oregon purchasers to take conflict minerals into account when making procurement decisions, and expressing favor for companies that are working to source conflict-free minerals from the DRC, would send a strong signal to companies as well as to U.S. legislators that now is a critical time to get involved in solutions.

As stated by Congolese surgeon and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Dr. Denis Mukwege, “A conflict-free minerals industry would contribute to ending the unspeakable violence the people of Congo have endured for years.” I urge the people and legislators of Oregon to voice your support for peace in the DRC by leveraging your consumer power and passing S.B. 471.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your consideration of this important initiative.

Sincerely,  
Ian Schwab  
Enough Project