

Good morning Chair Bynum and members of the committee. My name is Kate Sharaf, I use she/her pronouns, and I am a parent at Cottonwood school. I have two children a 7 1/2-year-old who is in second grade and a 4 1/2-year-old who will be in kindergarten next year. I am testifying today in support of the bill.

I want to start by saying that I am very concerned about the chemical contamination at our school resulting from use of teargas and other chemical munitions by ICE; at the same time I also want to recognize that this does not even begin to compare to the abuses that ICE visits upon immigrant and refugee families in our country.

As principal Amanda McAdoo shared in her testimony, our school has been severely impacted by the use of tear gas and chemical munitions at the ice building. We have found tear gas canisters, spent munitions, chemical residues, and the like in our play yard. As a parent I'm very concerned about what the impacts of exposure to these chemicals could be on my children. Our school has been in distance-learning since last March, but we are looking at potentially re-opening in a hybrid model as soon as the end of this March.

I am concerned about both immediate health impacts, especially on children that may have health conditions such as asthma that would be made more sensitive, and the long-term health impacts on our children. We have heard stories about these chemicals impacting protesters' menstrual cycles, and it is particularly concerning to think about what their impact could be on small children whose bodies are still developing.

I wanted to speak a little bit more about our school and our play yard. Our school's full name is the Cottonwood School of Civics and Science and it has an emphasis on place-based learning engaged with the community and the natural world. This approach extends to our playground. There is a corner of the playground closest to the ICE building which is a natural playground with mud and logs and boards for the children build and play with. The children dig in the dirt, they use drips of water from a faucet to make streams and canals; it's a very immersive experience. Kindergartners wait here for their parents to pick up and this play space is generally used by the youngest children. I like to stay after school with my children and let them play in this area, and I've been doing this since my oldest child was in kindergarten and her younger brother was three years old. This same play area is one of the areas where we have found many teargas canisters, spent munitions, and chemical residues. I worry that our playground, and this nature play area in particular, are now so contaminated that they are extremely unsafe for our children.

I very much support this bill to limit the use of teargas and other chemical munitions as much as possible. I do not think that these chemical weapons should be used in our communities on anyone, but certainly not in proximity to schools and residential areas where young children are impacted, with potentially severe health effects. While our school is a stark example with the degree of contamination we're seeing, I am certain that other schools across Portland have been exposed to these types of dangerous chemicals used by law-enforcement throughout the summer and beyond. We absolutely must stop allowing their use in our communities and I support this bill as a good first step in this direction. Thank you very much.