

Testimony Submitted by
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Oregon Consumer Justice
To the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

February 23rd, 2023

Regarding: Support for SB 546

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Megan Quintrell, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of Oregon Consumer Justice today in support of SB 546.

Oregon Consumer Justice (OCJ) organizes, advocates, and supports litigation to advance a justice movement that puts people first, ensuring all have the freedom to thrive and equitably share in our abundance of resources. For too long, flawed systems and economic policies that favor profits over people have stood in the way of this reality, with communities of color most often experiencing the most significant harm. Strengthened through responsive and reciprocal community relationships, OCJ is building a future where financial and business transactions can be relied upon as safe and where all Oregonians know and have recourse to exercise their consumer rights.

Access to safe, non-toxic cosmetic and personal care products ought to be a given, but many of the products that Oregonians use daily contain chemicals known to be hazardous to our health. This threatens the health and well-being of children, families, workers, and our environment. This is a consumer rights issue.

OCJ hosts a policy cohort of community-led organizations engaging in advocacy work across the state. Nearly all of these organizations are working within BIPOC and low-wage earning communities. When the policy cohort learned of SB 546, which would regulate the most harmful classes of chemicals in cosmetics and personal care products, almost all members expressed their support for OCJ's commitment to advocating on behalf of this consumer issue. A few cohort members shared that they have purchased cosmetic

products containing toxic chemicals without their knowledge and expressed concern for their community members, who they know have likely done the same. Cohort members shared a desire to gain more information to host community co-learning opportunities about the harmful nature of these readily available products. That said, knowledge of these chemicals and their dangerous impacts remains largely hidden.

There are very few federal regulations regarding chemicals in cosmetics. The Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetics Act (FDCA) has only restricted 11 chemicals since 1938, while the European Union has banned over 1,800 chemicals. We have a long way to go.

The global cosmetics industry is a \$532 billion business, and the U.S. is currently the world's largest beauty market, making up 20%. Yet even with all the profitability, major U.S. companies want to refrain from investing in safer alternatives or innovations like green chemistry. As a result, cosmetics contain all sorts of harmful and cheap ingredients—including formaldehyde, mercury, parabens, and phthalates. Perhaps, more importantly, toxic elements are often unknown and not disclosed to consumers.

There are more toxic chemicals in beauty products marketed toward Black women and women of color, resulting in a disproportionate impact on communities of color. Black women who use chemical hair straighteners are 30% more likely to develop breast cancer than white women. Black women are 44-77% more likely to develop breast cancer if they use hair dyes compared to white women. The way to address these inequities is to ensure the removal of the worst chemicals from each product category.

A few companies, although not enough, sell Environmental Working Group-certified clean cosmetics at an affordable price. Some of these brands are carried in Target and chain stores, but consumers need to know which brands are safe and what to look for. Requiring public disclosure of all chemical ingredients on a company's web page is an accessible way for consumers to make informed purchasing decisions.

OCJ believes all products should be safe for consumers—not just a few or just expensive specialty items. A \$532 billion industry can reinvest some of its profits into greener innovation to mend a flawed system and put people first.

Thank you for your consideration and your service to Oregon's communities.