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STATE REPRESENTATIVE
HOUSE DISTRICT 44
NORTH/NORTHEAST PORTLAND



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Testimony in Support of House Bill 2738-2

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Travis Nelson, and I am the State Representative for House District 44 - North and Northeast Portland. I am also a registered nurse who focused on population health. I am here today in support of HB 2738 with the -2 amendment that makes the bill effective on January 1, 2029. I bring this bill at the request of constituents in North Portland.

For nearly a decade, the fight to ban leaded fuel at Portland International Raceway has been ongoing in House District 44. Since at least 2016, community members have been raising concerns about the serious health risks posed by leaded fuel emissions. This advocacy did lead to the end of leaded gas sales from the city at Portland International Raceway and the introduction of signage meant to warn and inform the public of leaded gas in the dirt in that area. These efforts helped raise awareness, but they did not eliminate the danger. The reality is leaded fuel is still being used, and the health risks still remain for this community. In June of 2023, *The Guardian* published an expose outlying the continuing concerns from the community backed by data from new research (link to that article below). This article highlighted the dangers that my constituents have been flagging for years.

I want to be clear on what we are talking about here. Lead – lead has been banned worldwide for a reason. It is dangerous. According to *The Guardian*, an academic study of lead exposure from Cornell University, showed lead exposure is especially damaging to developing brains, and the effects can extend up to 25 miles from the source. *The Oregonian* also cited the Cornell study that showed lead exposure near raceways can cause a 10% drop in children's test scores by third grade. Additionally, long-term exposure near these raceways has been linked to increased mortality rates in elderly populations. A letter from the Department of Environmental Quality in 2022 stated clearly, “there is no safe level of lead exposure, especially for young children.”

Previous air studies commissioned by Portland Parks and Recreation were not 100% conclusive, in part because there has never been a full long-term study done. But we do have the previously mentioned data that lead can travel up to 25 miles from its origin. Most of House District 44 is within a 5-mile radius of PIR. It is about .9 mile to downtown Kenton, 1.2 miles to Piedmont and 1.3 miles to Arbor Lodge. The University Park, St. Johns and Cathedral Park neighborhoods are all within three miles. Unlike other racetracks in the U.S., the Portland International Raceway sits directly next to these densely populated neighborhoods in North Portland, and it is the ONLY racetrack in Oregon that is close to residents and allows leaded gas. Not only is the raceway near residents, but there are also 24 elementary schools and daycare centers within 2 miles. I would like to emphasize that if ONE child, just one, is impacted by this harmful poison that is one too many.

My constituents urged me to take action to protect their health and their children’s health from this threat. In response, I partnered with then-Commissioner Jayapal to convene meetings with the City of Portland, Multnomah County Public Health, and the Department of Environmental Quality to explore solutions. Unfortunately, no viable solution was found.

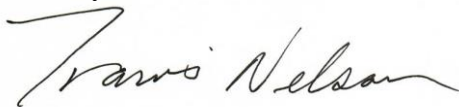
This led me to introduce House Bill 2738, which prohibits the use of leaded fuel at racetracks in cities with a population of 500,000 or more by the end of **this year**.

After hearing concerns from Portland Parks and Recreation, we introduced the –2 amendment, which allows for a gradual phase-out of races using leaded fuel until the end of 2028. This transition period provides Portland International Raceway with time to explore alternative events to offset lost revenue. Portland Parks and Recreation believes this timeline will also allow them to conduct a feasibility study and engage with the community to identify new event opportunities. I believe this approach balances public health concerns with the need for a responsible transition.

We have known about the dangers of lead for decades. It is time to finish this chapter for our communities. No family, no child, no person, should suffer from a very preventable health risk that lead presents. We can and must do better.

Please support HB 2738-2 for the health of Oregonians.

Thank you,



State Representative Travis Nelson
House District 44, North/NE Portland

Helpful Links

The Guardian- *Revealed: a toxic metal is in a US city's air – and may be harming children's brains*

- <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/jun/21/lead-emissions-racetracks-portland-international-raceway>

Willamette Weekly- *Jayapal Pushes Ryan to Ban Leaded Gasoline at Portland International Raceway*

- <https://www.wweek.com/news/city/2023/10/30/jayapal-pushes-ryan-to-ban-leaded-gasoline-at-portland-international-raceway/>

KGW- *A Portland park's dirty little secret*

- <https://www.kgw.com/video/news/local/the-story/a-portland-parks-dirty-little-secret-worth-your-time/283-8052791c-91db-4a6f-a5b8-ed261b22e0a2>

Cornell Study- *A Thousand Cuts: Cumulative Lead Exposure Reduces Academic Achievement*

- https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4082579

Kenton Lead Blob- Documentary

- <https://pdxair.uoregon.edu/2016/05/29/the-kenton-lead-blob/>

Portland Parks and Recreation's commissioned study:

- https://portlandraceway.com/file/143/10159-38_PPR_PIR_Lead_Assessment_Report_100517.pdf

Response to Questions

- Will this bill cause Portland International Raceway to close?
 - No. Portland Parks and Recreation has a three-year transition plan to phase out races using leaded fuel. This plan includes:
 - A market and feasibility study
 - Community engagement
 - Project design
 - Capital construction if needed
 - This bill **only** bans the use of leaded fuel—it does **not** prohibit other events or activities at Portland International Raceway, nor is it intended to close the park.
- Why not ban leaded gas at all raceways in Oregon?
 - Portland International Raceway is the only raceway that allows leaded gas that is next to densely populated neighborhoods in Oregon.
- If the study commissioned by Portland Parks and Recreation and Portland International Raceway said that they could not detect lead levels high enough to impact health, how do we know that the races are causing?
 - The letter from Department of Environmental Quality in September of 2022 outlines several issues with this study. They stated:
 - “DEQ did identify gaps in the data PIR collects about leaded fuel. These gaps include:
 - How much leaded fuel racers bring in;
 - How much leaded fuel racers use;
 - How much leaded fuel vendors sell, or racers bring in or use during drag or motorcycle races; and
 - Monitoring data during drag or motorcycle races.”
 - According to the data collected in this study, the monitoring on the day of the vintage care race (July 28, 2017) detected higher concentrations of lead in the air. This may not be a significant increase, but it is an increase. As previously noted, there is no safe level of lead for children and any potential increase in exposure should be mitigated.

Table One
Air Monitoring Results for Lead - July 28, 2017

Sample Number	Sample Location	Sample Duration (Mins)	Concentration (µg/m ³)
072817-Pb1	PIR Office Roof Patio	441	0.64
072817-Pb2	Pre-Grid	412	0.73
072817-Pb3	Turn 11	400	<0.47
072817-Pb4	South Property Line	370	<0.51
072817-Pb5	Turn 7	349	<0.54
OR-OSHA PEL - 50 µg/m ³ OR-OSHA AL - 30 µg/m ³ ACGIH TLV - 50 µg/m ³			

Table Two
Air Monitoring Results for Lead - August 11, 2017

Sample Number	Sample Location	Sample Duration (Mins)	Concentration ($\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
081117-Pb1	PIR Office Roof Patio	270	0.41
081117-Pb2	Pre-Grid	215	0.22
081117-Pb3	Turn 11	199	<0.19
081117-Pb4	South Property Line	240	<0.16
081117-Pb5	SW Grandstands	239	0.97
OR-OSHA PEL - 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ OR-OSHA AL - 30 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ACGIH TLV - 50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$			

- The city has declined to do additional studies for more accurate and long-term data to show that the lead is not leaving the park.
- What about the other sources of lead in North Portland?
 - It is true, North Portland residents are exposed to several sources of air pollution. There has been legislation and advocacy to address these issues since 2016.
 - In the 2017 session, [SB 871](#) was passed in response to the concerns about lead from housing demolitions.
 - Addressing this source of air pollution is just one step towards improve the air quality in North Portland.
- Will this lead to more street racing in North Portland?
 - In 2023, we passed [SB 615](#) which allows for vehicles to be towed for violating street racing laws. Leaded gas has been banned for street vehicles since 1996 through the Clean Air Act. The vehicles that use leaded gas are not the same as street racing cars.
- If racers are moving away from using leaded gas, why do we need this bill? Won't we see an eventual end to the use with new technology and more efficient fuels?
 - Since 2016, Portland Parks and Recreation has faced repeated calls from the community and elected officials to end the use of leaded gas at the raceway. A phase-out was requested by 2018 and to date, was never implemented. For nearly a decade, racers have been aware of community concerns but have yet to transition away from leaded fuel on their own.
 - **HB 2738-2 gives the park and their participants three years to decline these races gradually. This bill gives them a deadline to complete this phase out.**