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Lawmakers and Environmental Health Advocates Call for the Passage of a Suite of Toxics Bills During National Public Health Week

Portland and Eugene, OR— Environmental and public health advocates are calling for the Oregon legislature to move swiftly to pass a suite of toxics-reduction bills to address toxic chemicals in kids' products, cosmetics and personal care products, and pesticides sprayed on school grounds. National Public Health Week, April 3 to 9, highlights issues that are important to improving the health of our nation, according to the American Public Health Association.

These chemicals can cause immediate and long-term harm. Toxic chemicals are linked to neurological damage which can leave a child with learning disabilities. Over time chemicals can also cause skin ailments, reproductive disruption and cancer. Exposure to harmful chemicals in consumer products and the environment disproportionately impacts communities of color and lower-income communities. It is often the case that cheaper and deadlier products are marketed to the most vulnerable members of our communities (ie. mercury in skin lighteners).

1. Toxic Free Schools (SB 426)

It might be hard to believe, but school districts sometimes inadvertently use highly dangerous pesticides on school grounds, creating a safety risk for students, staff and community members. Oregon school districts and regulatory agencies currently lack funding, coordination and resources needed to implement safer pesticide use practices. SB 426 will fix a 14-year

unfunded mandate for schools and create a path towards modernized record keeping and using the least toxic choices for pest control under the Healthy and Safe Schools Act.

[SB 426](#) was voted out of the Senate Education Committee on March 30 with strong bipartisan support and has been referred to the Joint Ways and Means Committee to address its fiscal impact.

2. Toxic Free Cosmetics (SB 546)

[SB 546](#) is the first time the legislature has seriously considered tackling toxic chemicals in cosmetics and personal care products. It would prohibit the sale of the worst classes of chemicals found in cosmetics and personal care products. A [new report from the Washington State Department of Toxicology](#) published in January 2023 concluded that cosmetics marketed to women of color contained lead, arsenic and formaldehyde not disclosed on labeling.

SB 546 recently passed out of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee on March 28, *unanimously* and bipartisan, and has been referred to the Joint Ways and Means Committee to address its fiscal impact.

3. Toxic Free Kids Modernization Act (HB 3043)

[HB 3043](#) would modernize Oregon's 2015 Toxic Free Kids Act to be able to keep up with scientific developments, such as giving OHA the authority to regulate a class of chemicals. It would also mandate manufacturers to report listed chemicals of concern for brand names and product models so that manufacturers have more accessible information for their buying decisions.

[HB 3043](#) passed out of the House Committee on Climate and Energy on March 15, also *unanimously* and bipartisan, and subsequently passed the full House also on a bipartisan vote, on March 22. It heads to the Senate Energy and Environment Committee, as its second chamber.

Quotes:

"The passage of SB 546 will allow consumers to make better buying choices and prohibit for sale some of the worst chemical classes associated with some of the worst health impacts in cosmetics and personal care products- such as cancer and reproductive harm," said **Senator Janeen Sollman (D-15)**. With neighboring states working on similar policies, the time is now to address this in Oregon. Let's continue Oregon's reputation of being an environmental health leader and send the message that the health and well-being of Oregonians are prioritized."

"As an educator and a mother, I deeply care about limiting toxic chemical exposures to our kids- both in products and schools," said **Representative Courtney Neron (D-26)**. "There should be no reason kids should be exposed to dangerous pesticides on school grounds or substances like lead and bisphenols in toys. HB 3043 and SB 426 are both unfinished business from previous sessions and the result of many months of collaboration between Bipartisan lawmakers, stakeholders, and agencies. I truly hope this is the year we get these through the finish line."

"It is a no-brainer that our lawmakers should take action on toxic chemicals in things like kids' toys and cosmetics," said **Jamie Pang, Environmental Health Program Director at Oregon Environmental Council**. "It is unacceptable that in 2023 formaldehyde, a known carcinogen, can be found in products on chain store shelves. Additionally, formaldehyde releasers are unregulated and allowed in unlimited quantities in the U.S. We thank the lawmakers for taking leadership to tackle this critical issue."

"Schools are places where children should be absolutely safe from toxic pesticide exposure," said **Jennifer Eisele, Pesticides Program Manager at Beyond Toxics**. "I'm excited for the collaborative process supporting Toxic Free Schools to make sure school districts get the support they need to adopt the least toxic methods to address pest problems and to share ideas about best practices through a diverse stakeholder committee."

"Most of the 80,000 chemicals on the market in the United States have been put into use without testing long-term consequences for the environment, or their impacts on our health," said **Celeste Meiffren-Swango, state director with Environment Oregon**. "We are glad to see the Oregon legislature considering several bills that would help ensure that Oregonians aren't at risk of exposure to dangerous chemicals in consumer products or at school, and we hope to see them get across the finish line."

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