



January 25, 2023

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Levy and Levy, and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on HB 3043. My name is Emerson Hamlin, and I am a political organizer for the Oregon Nurses Association. We represent 15,000 nurses, including RNs, advanced practice nurses, and allied health workers. I am writing today to express support from the Oregon Nurses Association for the passage of HB 3043, the toxic free kids bill.

In 2015, a bipartisan legislative effort led to the passage of the Toxic Free Kids Act. That legislation, which required manufacturers of children's products to disclose, and then phase out, the worst chemicals in kid's products, was a critical first step in making kids safer. However, we need to do more: currently, the Oregon Health Authority is limited to adding only five chemicals to the list of regulated chemicals every three years. This is wholly inadequate, given that 1,500 new chemicals are introduced every year. Additionally, permanent exemptions are granted to manufacturers using harmful chemicals, even as safer alternatives become available. HB 3043 offers a fix to these concerns: it would allow OHA to regulate classes of chemicals and remove the limit on the number of chemicals that can be regulated. It also removes permeant exemptions, so that when safer alternatives are made available, manufacturers will utilize them. Lastly, this bill improves reporting, which allows parents to know what is in their children's products.

This bill is critical because kids suffer serious consequences when they are exposed to toxic chemicals. Consequences include slow development, weaker immune systems, and hormonal disruptions, all impacting their ability to live healthy lives as they grow. Furthermore, these chemicals are everywhere: for example, flame retardant chemicals, which are frequently used in blankets, pajamas, and furniture have impacted liver and thyroid function, and kids' endocrine system. I also urge you to remember that not all kids are equally likely to experience these health impacts: kids from lower-income neighborhoods are more frequently exposed to environmental pollution and toxics in household products. This is not only a health issue, but one of equity and fairness.

As nurses, our members believe that every child deserves an equal chance to be healthy. It is through passing bills this one that we can ensure that all our children can live long, healthy, and meaningful lives. ONA urges a yes vote on HB 3043. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emerson Hamlin

Political Organizer at Oregon Nurses Association