

DATE: February 28, 2023  
TO: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
FROM: Sammi Teo, Public Policy Advocate  
RE: Support for SB 546 to advance health equity in Oregon



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

Oregon Food Bank's mission is to eliminate hunger and its root causes. We pursue this goal in two key ways: we foster community connections to help people access nutritious food today; and we advocate to change policies that drive hunger and poverty.

### Poor health has economic consequences that exacerbate poverty and food insecurity.

The health of our communities directly impacts rates of poverty and food insecurity. Adverse health impacts have a wide range of economic consequences, such as increased medical costs and debt, or chronic health conditions that escalate barriers to work opportunities and affect one's long-term earning potential. According to an [Oregon Health Authority report](#) (2019), personal spending on health care is higher in Oregon than the national average. High health care costs jeopardize the financial stability of people in Oregon. The OHA report found that at least 60% of Chapter 7 and Chapter 12 bankruptcy filings in Oregon included medical debt. The report also found that Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander Oregonians were three times as likely to report using up their savings on medical bills as white Oregonians. Poor health has economic consequences that make it more difficult to disrupt cycles of poverty and food insecurity.

### Addressing toxicity of personal and beauty products in Oregon is an area of opportunity for us to improve the health of our communities.

People assume personal and beauty products (collectively called "cosmetics") are safe. But many of the products we use every day, such as lotions, shaving creams, deodorants, and make-up, contain chemicals known to be hazardous to our health. And more importantly, often it's the cheaper ingredients that are deadlier, which disproportionately impacts people experiencing poverty, hunger, and food insecurity.

**Black women** face particularly high toxics exposure. Research shows that Black women use more cosmetics, such as skin lighteners that contain **lead and mercury**, and spend as much as 9 times more than the average consumer on hair products.

**Women of color** who use cosmetics have higher PFAS content in their bloodstream and are up to **77% more likely to develop breast cancer if they use hair dyes**. Such chemical exposure is also an occupational hazard. Salon and nail salon workers (particularly Vietnamese women) are exposed to **reproductive toxins**, such as toluene and benzene and have **higher rates of cancer**.

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**Pregnant people and newborn babies** are also particularly at risk. Chemicals can be absorbed into the fetus in utero and can cause **developmental harm**. Toxic cosmetic ingredients known to have **hormone disrupting properties have been found in women's breast milk** and newborn babies. Babies are at higher risk for long-term health effects from exposure to toxics because their internal organs are still developing and maturing.

**SB 546 provides a critical step in the right direction towards healthier communities and safer personal products.**

SB 546 would:

- Require the public disclosure of all chemical ingredients on a company's product webpage. Doing so is an accessible way for consumers to make educated purchasing decisions.
- Regulate or prohibit the sale of the worst classes of chemicals in personal care products, like formaldehyde, formaldehyde releasers, mercury, and lead.

This bill will help reduce Oregonians' (particularly women and children's) exposure to toxic chemicals in everyday products. This is why we urge you to support SB 546. Thank you.

