

To: Chair Frederick, Vice Chair Weber and Members of the Senate Committee on Education

From: Jennifer Eisele, Communities and Ecosystems Project Manager, Beyond Toxics

Date: April 16, 2025

Subject: Testimony in support of HB 2684, Toxics Free Schools

Chair Frederick and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jennifer Eisele, Communities and Ecosystems Project Manager at Beyond Toxics, and I am here today to testify in support of HB 2684, which strengthens and modernizes the existing School Integrated Pest Management (IPM) law to better protect children from unnecessary pesticide exposure in schools. Thank you for today's opportunity to share information about the Toxic Free Schools bill.

In 2009, Beyond Toxics and a broad coalition of stakeholders worked with then-State Senator Suzanne Bonamici to pass the Senate Bill 637, the School IPM Law. We met as a formal Legislative Workgroup that included all stakeholders, from Oregonians for Food and Shelter, to Coalition of School Administrators, to Oregon Schools Facility Managers Association and received input from ODA and ODE. It required schools to develop an IPM plan and designate an IPM coordinator to oversee its implementation. However, since then, gaps in transparency and implementation have emerged, making it clear that simple updates are necessary.

As explained by Representative Hudson, HB 2684 builds upon the foundation of the original bill by requiring school districts to review, update, and readopt their IPM plans and every five years to ensure compliance with state and federal pesticide laws. Additionally, it mandates that these plans be made publicly available on school websites, increasing transparency and accessibility for parents, staff, and the broader community. This transparency gap is a simple result of school districts not having websites in 2009.

One important update in this bill is the inclusion of school gardens in the definition of school campuses. School gardens are valuable learning environments where students interact with nature and develop an understanding of agriculture and ecology. In 2009, there were not many school garden programs. Today, approximately 700 schools have school gardens that serve as educational spaces and produce food for families. Including them under the IPM law ensures they will receive the same level of protection and oversight as other areas of school property.

This session we have worked collaboratively with COSA to address concerns through amendment language to keep this bill moving forward. HB 2684 passed the House Committee on Education with unanimous, bipartisan support.

Finally, we are supportive of continuing to meet and work with key stakeholders such as COSA, school IPM coordinators, school garden managers, and others to address the most efficient way to implement the requirements of HB 2684 into school operations.

This legislation is a commonsense update that will strengthen protections for children, improve transparency, and ensure that Oregon schools continue to be a leader in safe and sustainable pest management practices.

Thank you for your time and I urge a yes vote for HB 2684.