

MULTNOMAH COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
PUBLIC TESTIMONY SIGN-UP

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MEETING DATE: October 27th, 2011

SUBJECT: Proposed Ban on Bisphenol A

AGENDA NUMBER OR TOPIC: R4

FOR: XX AGAINST: THE ABOVE AGENDA ITEM

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY (In lieu of attendance)

I will submit my public testimony in person

IF YOU WISH TO ADDRESS THE BOARD:

1. Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk.
2. Address the County Commissioners from the presenter table microphones. Please limit your comments to **3 minutes**.
3. State your name for the official record.
4. If written documentation is presented, please furnish one copy to the Board Clerk.

IF YOU WISH TO SUBMIT WRITTEN COMMENTS TO THE BOARD:

1. Please complete this form and return to the Board Clerk.
2. Written testimony will be entered into the official record.



Testimony in **FAVOR** of a ban on selected products containing bisphenol A in Multnomah County

October 27, 2011

Chair Cogen, Commissioners, thank you for this opportunity to share Physicians for Social Responsibility's views. For the record, I am Dr. Maye Thompson, the Environmental Health Program Director at Oregon PSR. I am a public health nurse by vocation. I represent almost 2,000 Oregon health care professionals who care about the gravest threats to human health.

Bisphenol A (BPA) is a hormone-disrupting toxicant found in plastic products including many baby bottles, sippy cups, food containers, and other consumer products. BPA leaches out of plastic into foods and liquids that we put into our bodies. Recent findings show BPA present in the blood of about 95% of adults, in the cord blood of newborn children, and in the environment. We are exposed by mouth when we eat and drink; by absorption through our skin; and to a smaller extent, inhalation in house dust and soil particles. BPA crosses the placenta, and is found in breast milk. In the body, BPA is metabolized by the kidneys.

Low-level BPA exposure is linked to increased susceptibility to cancer, hormonal changes affecting fertility, miscarriage and endometriosis; obesity, insulin resistance, diabetes and heart disease; and developmental problems. Studies on animals also implicate BPA as a reproductive toxicant, affecting the development and survival of fetuses and neonates; a thyroid disruptor; and a likely neurotoxicant, possibly related to effects on thyroid function which influences neural development and thus also affects behavior.

Those most at risk are developing fetuses, infants and young children. Children are very different from adults when exposed to toxins in their environment. Children are not small adults. They eat, breathe and drink more per pound of body weight than do adults. Their gastrointestinal tract and skin have more than two times the surface area of adults. They have lower levels of metabolic enzymes, so toxicants stay around in their bodies longer. They play outside more, and

are closer to ground. And we all know they have lots of hand-to-mouth behaviors. A greater proportion of the toxicant enters a child's body and stays there longer, allowing it more time to exert its damaging effects. Studies have found that children have the highest levels of BPA in their bodies, followed by teens and adults. Even small amounts of endocrine-disrupting chemicals such as BPA can impact a child's ability to reach his or her full potential.

Protecting environmental public health saves lives and money. According to OEC's February 2008 report *The Price of Pollution*, Oregonians spend at least \$1.57 billion annually on preventable disease caused by pollution. This includes direct costs such as hospitalization, and indirect costs such as special needs education and lost earning potential. Typically, decision makers consider only the upfront costs of implementing environmental health protection measures designed to reduce pollution, ignoring the financial impacts of inaction.

Preventing exposure is our best option, by banning BPA in key products. Recently, Canada banned BPA in baby bottles. Major companies such as Nalgene and Playtex, have also phased out BPA. Current state and federal laws are outdated and do not adequately protect our children's health. The Oregon Legislature had the opportunity to ban BPA, several times, and failed to do so.

While the American Chemistry Council and I have many differences, we agree on two things. One is that more scientific studies about BPA would be a good thing; and chemicals policy is best made at the national level. The proposed ban in Multnomah County is not ideal policy. But it is apparently the best policy "of the possible". We need to ensure our children develop in an environment in which they can reach their full potential. We have enough evidence to exercise precaution and eliminate a large swath of items that expose our most precious legacy, our children, to chemicals to which they just don't need to be exposed. And if Multnomah County is willing to step up to the plate with this admittedly limited measure, I support your action as a step in the right direction, and an example to other policy makers. Thank you for your time.

--- Dr. Maye Thompson