

Dear Co-chairs Dembrow and Power and members of the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction,

I am a resident of Northwest Portland, a member of St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, and a 2015 GreenFaith Fellow.

As an Episcopalian who has done volunteer environmental stewardship work in a number of interfaith settings, I've learned there is a common religious belief in our moral duty to protect natural resources, to use them wisely and with reverence, and to protect them for future generations. All religious traditions also share a commitment to truth and honesty.

In truth, we are in the midst of a global environmental crisis. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently concluded that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced from 2010 levels by 45% by 2030 and by 100% by 2050 to preserve even a two-thirds chance of avoiding dangerous climate change.

Let that sink in. In the necessarily rapid and complete transition to a post fossil-fuel economy, today's young adults and children will bear most of the costs and all of the residual risks of our failure to stop carbon pollution sooner. We've fully understood the need to change for at least 30 years but have delayed meaningful action at scale. The risks we're imposing on our children and future generations—even if we do the right things now and for decades to come—are so high that no one should have to face them.

Lamentably, the environmental crisis extends beyond climate. The ecosystems that sustain all life by providing clean air, pure water, and fertile soil have been severely compromised by centuries of industrialization and human expansion. Sixty percent of the world's wildlife has been eradicated in the last 40 years. There are no ecologically significant wilderness areas left in Oregon. We are approaching a mass extinction event on a scale last seen when the dinosaurs died out 65 million years ago.

It is therefore critically important for the legislature to pass HB 2020, the Clean Energy Jobs bill, this session. The bill should be strengthened if possible, but neither its scope nor the pace of its mandatory greenhouse gas emissions reductions can be weakened.

While we must do more in response to the environmental crisis, HB 2020 is a good start. It will reduce greenhouse gas pollution in Oregon by approximately 2 million metric tons per year. Lower emissions will lead to better air quality, improving the health and welfare of many Oregonians, especially children and the elderly.

Additionally, passing the bill will reduce the risks and costs of environmental disasters such as wildfires, which are increasing in Oregon in size, intensity, and cost.

I live near Forest Park in Portland and frequently walk or jog its trails. My dream for Forest Park is that it matures into healthy, biologically diverse old growth, free from the invasive species that plague it today. My nightmare is that Forest Park will succumb to climate change, becoming a tinderbox during a period of extreme drought and burning

catastrophically, taking vast swaths of Northwest Portland's residential neighborhoods with it. After witnessing the Eagle Creek fire and having friends in Santa Rosa who lost their home and vineyard to the wildfires there, barely escaping with their lives, this nightmare seems all too real to me.

Various business interests will seek to weaken the bill or to delay action to protect their profits. They'll argue that change is too costly or that Oregon's actions alone would be merely symbolic. But they are wrong and their arguments are morally void.

We are responsible for the greenhouse gases we emit and the damage they cause. While fossil fuel companies have cast false doubt on climate science, having made it possible for some to believe that greenhouse gas emissions are relatively harmless, we can no longer engage in this delusion. We cannot continue to pretend that our actions and our inactions lack consequences. We cannot continue to avoid our obligations simply because it costs money to change course or because other states or nations are addressing the climate crisis differently. Assuming responsibility for our own mess is our basic stewardship obligation as Oregonians.

Moreover, to the extent that the necessary transition to clean, renewable sources of energy is economically challenging, the Clean Energy Jobs bill is carefully tailored to protect Oregon's industries in the global marketplace. The bill makes necessary investments in energy efficiency to offset the higher costs of fossil fuels. More generally, the bill will stimulate the new, clean energy economy of the 21st century. These investments will improve the overall wellbeing of our people and environments while making our economy more resilient in the face of a carbon-constrained world.

The Clean Energy Jobs bill establishes a framework for just and effective action to prevent dangerous climate change. Oregonians are ready to assume our shared responsibility to reduce and eliminate carbon pollution. This will require sacrifice and cooperation and we're up to the task. The alternative—failing to act and therefore condemning our children, grandchildren and future generations to the ravages of dangerous climate change—is unthinkable.

Thank you,

Peter Sergienko

Peter Sergienko
Northwest Portland