



April 2, 2019

Rep. Ken Helm, Chair, and members of the  
House Committee on Energy and Environment  
Oregon State Legislature  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB3408 regarding community efforts to reduce woodsmoke

Dear Chair Helm and Committee Members:

I am writing you today in support of HB3408 which would direct moneys from the General Fund to the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality for deposit in a Residential Solid Fuel Heating Air Quality Improvement Fund to fund community efforts to reduce emissions from solid fuel burning devices that burn wood. Doing so would both promote economic development and improve public health.

As a local environmental regulatory agency, we have worked closely with DEQ over many decades to improve air quality from solid fuel burning devices such as woodstoves and fireplaces. These devices are the main culprit for our wintertime woodsmoke issues in Lane County and around the state.

While heating with wood is culturally common and economically viable for many Oregonians, rural Oregonians often use wood as heat because it is sometimes the only available option. Electric outages from storms and lack of alternatives such as natural gas or limited propane make it hard to find different reliable sources of heat. However, the result of wood burning is the contribution to particulate matter into our airshed. Emissions from solid fuel burning devices contribute to:

- particulate matter (most of which is in the PM2.5 size range of greater health concern); and
- air toxics (including carcinogens attached to the particulate matter).

Communities all over Oregon are struggling to find the balance between affordable heating and air quality degradation from wood smoke. This bill will provide much needed assistance for these communities to find solutions that help clean our airshed while continuing affordable heating.

Statewide, communities are exploring diverse options to improve wintertime air quality. For example, in Lane County we have one federally recognized non-attainment area in the small rural community of Oakridge, and another air quality maintenance area in Eugene-Springfield. Over the past three years, Oakridge has been able to meet federal air quality standards by implementing programs that help residents burn cleaner and more efficiently, thereby reducing particulate pollution.

Previous state and federal funds and grants have allowed us and our local partners to operate woodstove change-outs or upgrades to higher efficiency devices, provide seasoned dry firewood especially for lower income families, install additional back-up heating with alternative methods like ductless heat pumps, and upgrade weatherization for homes. All these programs are effective but have administrative costs that not all communities across the state are able to budget internally. This bill will establish a reliable fund that will allow Oregonians to fund and implement programs like these to help reduce particulate pollution from wood burning.

Thank you for this opportunity for comment. Please let me know if the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency can be of further assistance as you proceed.

Sincerely,

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