

Providence Health & Services
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February 4, 2020

The Honorable Michael Dembrow
Chair, Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for Senate Bill 1530, Cap and Trade

Dear Chair Dembrow and members of the committee:

On behalf of Providence Health & Services, I would like to offer the following testimony regarding the Oregon legislature's efforts on Cap and Trade. In this era of growing concern about the rising amounts of greenhouse gas emissions into our atmosphere as a leading contributor to global warming – we believe it is critical that Providence voice our support for state level efforts to reduce carbon.

Providence is a faith-based, not-for-profit health system that proudly serves as Oregon's largest health care system and largest employer with over 22,000 employees. As a health care provider, we are committed to providing for the immediate needs of our patients, but we are equally committed to creating a better world and believe that our ministries play a fundamental part in transforming the future of our communities.

Climate change undoubtedly affects human health. The World Health Organization considers climate change the biggest global health threat of the century. Rising temperatures and sea levels, more extreme weather and increasing atmospheric carbon act as threat multipliers, increasing the incidence and severity of diseases such as asthma, heart attacks and kidney failure. Action to reduce carbon emissions and climate change can dramatically improve health- particularly in our poor and vulnerable communities that bear the brunt of environmental health impacts.

Our environmental stewardship vision was outlined most recently by the Sisters of Providence, Mother Joseph Province, in December 2009: *We ask that you be good stewards of all we have been given for this ministry, our people, our resources and our earth. Our society has not always been wise in its use of our land, water and air. We hope Providence will be a model of good stewardship that we may demonstrate faithfulness to our values and that others may learn sound stewardship practices from us.*

As the state's largest health system and employer, with medical facilities that run 24/7, we understand our impact on the environment and are taking tangible steps to help mitigate that impact. Providence has set high goals and is tracking our success related to energy and water use; greenhouse gas reduction; waste optimization; reduction of hazardous chemicals; increased healthy and sustainable foods; and environmental preferred purchasing.

Although Providence, and other entities, are not waiting and taking preliminary actions voluntarily the framework established in SB 1530 is critical to our state's long-term success. SB 1530 is necessary because it will take all of Oregon, moving forward together, to make the necessary changes required to improve public health and reduce climate change.

In health care, we rely on evidence-based, clinically proven models to improve the lives of our patients, and similarly we encourage the committee to make policy decisions based on the most recent science and the principles of predictive modeling. Greenhouse gasses are causing climate change and these changes are impacting the health of our local Oregon communities. Increased rates of childhood asthma, complications for seniors and other vulnerable patients when wildfires rage in the summer and fall, and increased risks for our coastal communities are all tied to climate change. The evidence is clear: in order to minimize the damage from climate change we must act immediately and cut emissions significantly. Such action is a medical imperative.

Providence Health & Services is proud to have been a part of Oregon communities for more than 160 years, during which time we have pursued our Mission of caring for those in need with the utmost compassion and respect. As leaders we ask you to join us in protecting Oregon's future for the next 160 years and support Senate Bill 1530, an important step forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brian Chesebro', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Brian Chesebro, M.D.
Medical Director, Environmental Stewardship
Providence Health & Services - Oregon