

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Helm and Smith, and Members of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment,

Thank you for reading my statement in support of HB 2488, Equity and Climate in Land Use. This bill will adopt a new Goal 20 for climate change and equity that prioritizes the needs of historically underserved communities and address climate change. As a librarian, I have studied the connection between the damaging and devaluing the natural world and the harms done to low-income and other marginalized communities in acts of environmental racism. As a parent, I feel a desperate need to leave my children a less broken world. This bill is a start towards that goal.

I am in agreement with the analysis of this bill provided by John Jordan-Cascade. He writes:

Now is the time to move forward long-needed reforms to our statewide land use planning goals. If our state is to adequately confront the 21st Century challenges presented by the climate crisis and systemic environmental racism, then we need a 21st Century planning system that is up to the task. For that reason, I urge you to support HB 2488—Equity and Climate in Land Use, to ensure that Oregon's land use planning system includes a comprehensive and rounded approach to addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, equity, hazard risk reduction and environmental justice.

Oregon's land use planning system has long been a model for responsible and deliberate land use planning. However, it fails to explicitly consider climate change within any of the 19 statewide land use planning goals. A single new statewide land use planning goal—Goal 20—would ensure that climate, equity and environmental justice are addressed in our statewide land use planning decisions. Local governments have been and are currently making critical decisions regarding comprehensive plans, urban growth boundaries, and urban and rural reserves without sufficient consideration (if any) of either the projected climate impacts of land use decisions within their jurisdiction or whether these decisions will help achieve Oregon's greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. According to the U.S. Global Change Research Program's Second State of the Carbon Cycle Report(2018), 'Emissions from the urban built environment are directly shaped by societal factors, including regulations and policies governing land use, technologies such as transportation, and indirect factors such as demands for goods and services produced outside city boundaries.'

Further, we know that the climate crisis did not emerge out of a vacuum: it is both a product of and exacerbates existing racial, social and socioeconomic inequities. Oregon's Native American governments and tribal communities, Black, Latinx and other people of color, as well as low income and under-resourced rural communities, have told us time and again that our current planning system simply does not serve them. Consultation and inclusion in land use decision-making processes is often inadequate and insufficient in scope. Pollution and environmental risks and hazards are too often situated in the communities that can least afford and are least equipped to cope.

I therefore strongly support the passage of HB 2488 to update Oregon's Land Use Planning System to address climate change, environmental justice and equity in the planning system in a holistic and integrated manner, which is the only way to prevent climate responses from reinforcing existing inequities.

Thank you for all your good work on behalf of current and future Oregonians.

Roberta Richards
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