

Testimony in Support of HB 2488
3/8/2021

Good afternoon, Chair Marsh, and Members of the Committee on Energy and the Environment,

Thank you for this opportunity to express my full support for House Bill 2488: Climate justice in land use. My name is Gwen Trice. I am a resident in Wallowa County, and the Founder and Executive Director of the Maxville Heritage Interpretive Center in Joseph, Oregon.

I am taking my personal time to testify today in strong support of this bill because it addresses the root causes of climate change, and environmental and economic injustices in Oregon. As a resident in Eastern Oregon for the past 14 years, I know that our land use choices can either help or hurt our ability to adapt to an increasingly unpredictable and risky climate. HB 2488 for a new Goal 20 for climate justice provides the necessary framework for local governments to assess how our most vulnerable communities are affected by climate change, and remedy the unequal burdens.

Eastern Oregon is vulnerable to drought, fire and extreme heat. Many eastern Oregonians have underlying health conditions that are worsened by the impacts of a warming climate such as high temperatures and wildfire smoke.

I have underlying health conditions that include asthma and a heart ailment, these conditions are impacted when air quality and high temperatures dictate unsafe conditions to be outside, often weather forecasts precedes caution for the general public to keep windows closed, stay inside unless necessary – it is crucial for me to perform daily work tasks outside of my home and often in the forested landscape.

Passing House Bill 2488 will support my community in Wallowa County in the following ways:

“(b) With respect to environmental justice and equity:

“(A) Ensure that the opportunity to participate in land use planning and decision making is available to disadvantaged groups;

“(B) Identify relevant disparate impacts in land use planning and decision-making through an equity mapping tool or a comparable methodology that uses geographic information system mapping and another relevant data to incorporate census data, public health data, community-based input and other relevant information to highlight disparate impacts experienced by certain populations, including the lack of access to housing and public infrastructure and greater exposure to health risks, pollution and natural hazards;

“(C) Adopt and incorporate practices

Another exemplary aspect of House Bill 2488 is setting a new standard for inclusion and equity across the state. I especially support the section with clear definitions around environmental justice and historically disadvantaged communities. It is time that Oregon stopped using the offensive term “minority people.” This is because those of us who are not white need to be identified as who we really are in our communities – We are Black or African American; We are Hispanic or Latino; We are Indigenous or Native American; Asian or Asian American. I hope that House Bill 2488 will set a new standard by which we can update all laws with the appropriate identifiers that reflect the rich diversity of Oregon's residents, and that can set a positive example for other states struggling with the same outdated language.

I therefore strongly support the passage of HB 2488 out of the House Energy and Environment Committee, and urge for full funding in the Ways and Means Committee. Now is the time 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 policies from reinforcing existing inequities.

Thank you for listening to my comments and for helping Oregonians create an equitable and climate-smart future for Oregon.

Sincerely,

Gwen Trice
608 Depot Street
Enterprise, OR 97828