

3/18/20

Chair Beyer, Vice Chair Findley and members of the Senate Energy and Environment Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SCR 17: An Environmental Justice Framework for Oregon. I work as a transportation planner in Eugene, Oregon and have been a community advocate for a variety of environment and climate justice causes. I urge you to support SCR 17. [I / We] acknowledge that our State Legislature needs to do much more to address the urgent issues of environmental and climate justice in a timely fashion. A first step is agreeing to a statement of principles that set the bar for future action. The proposed resolution follows a valuable tradition of passing resolutions at times we must take first steps to right wrongs, such as the UN Declaration on Human Rights attempts to do.

This resolution is a conversation starter that we hope will lead to the investments our communities need to be resilient and will benefit future generations to come. We need a shared statement of conviction that lays the foundation for future policy to address the needs of our frontline communities who are Black, Native American, Indigenous and People of Color communities, our disabled communities, essential workers, youth, low-income people and those who are most vulnerable in rural and urban communities. This resolution recognizes that the lack of services and disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards faced by many communities in Oregon is a product of exclusion from and unequal access to decision-making processes. SCR 17 would help align the equity goals throughout the legislative and administrative branches of government, to build a just, equitable, and resilient future for all Oregonians.

Events such as the September 2020 wildfires, in which I was on-the-ground running supplies throughout town during the Holiday Farm fire, disproportionately impacted historically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities in many rural areas of our state. As we have seen with the impacts of Covid-19, which we have also seen disproportionately impact underserved communities, we need to invest in healthy food, better multimodal transportation access to essential services and jobs, renewable energy infrastructure, clean air and water, good jobs with a family-sustaining wage, and a range of workforce services and skills training. In recognition of climate trends such as fire, flood and energy system overloads, SCR 17 draws our attention to the need to repair communities to "build back better," and states that Oregon will "address environmental pollution on the basis of the right of all people to clean air, safe and affordable drinking water and protection from climate hazards and the sustainable preservation of ecological integrity."

At the core of this resolution are Oregonians from across the state fighting for an equitable and sustainable society based in environmental justice -- without clean air and water, without energy and goods that are produced without harming us, without stable climate and weather, our communities are cast into chaos. A framework of shared principles helps us achieve equity and sustainability. This resolution acknowledges that Oregon needs to move towards a regenerative economy that prioritizes community health protection, respects traditional ecological knowledge, and ensures the full and fair participation of Black, Native American, Indigenous and People of Color communities, disabled communities, essential workers, youth, low-income people and those who are most vulnerable in rural and urban communities in the decision-making process.

I urge you to vote yes on SCR 17. As Oregon takes on the monumental challenge of redressing these impacts, there should be a clear indication from the Legislature is also fighting for an equitable and sustainable society based in environmental justice.

Best,

Corrie
(She/They)