



3/18/21

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

My name is Ira Cuello-Martinez and I am here representing PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Concurrent Resolution 17: an Environmental Justice Framework for Oregon.

At PCUN, we represent Oregon's farmworkers and low wage Latinx families. Our community members have felt the impacts of climate change with the hotter summers, prolonged droughts, severe wildfires and wildfire smoke, and through the close proximity to high polluting facilities such as the Covanta incinerator in Brooks. The urgency to address the climate crisis is clear and an initial step in the right direction is to agree to a statement of principles that set the standard for future policy. The proposed resolution outlines that initial step to include an environmental justice framework as we confront the issue of climate change.

SCR 17 is crucial to PCUN because it would bring equity to the legislative and administrative process as we build a just and resilient future for all Oregonians. The resolution also acknowledges the disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards that is primarily faced by frontline communities. Those communities include: Black, Native American, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, immigrants, essential workers, youth, low-income, and rural communities. This acknowledgment allows us to pursue policies to protect all Oregonians from the harms of pollution and climate change, and also direct investment, job opportunities, and community improvement to these Oregonians first so they are not left behind any longer.

As previously stated, our community members live and work in areas where they experience the impacts of climate change. In fact, Oregon Health Authority (OHA)'s *2020 Climate and Health in Oregon* report underscores the fact that the climate crisis poses an immediate threat to the health and wellbeing of Oregonians across the state, while disproportionately harming frontline communities. Climate scientists and policymakers alike are increasingly making the connection between wildfires and climate change, which is increasing the frequency and intensity of wildfires in Oregon and the rest of the West as summers get hotter, heatwaves get longer, droughts get more intense, and conditions get dryer. The 2020 wildfires are a clear example of how historically disadvantaged communities, such as farmworkers, were disproportionately affected. They continued harvesting crops, risking their health, while everyone else evacuated the area. More frequent wildfires are expected to increase respiratory illnesses, heart disease and other poor health outcomes in the decades to come.

The environmental justice framework centers an equitable and sustainable society highlighting climate change as racial justice, worker health and safety, and a public health crisis. It 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, immigrants, essential workers, youth, low-income, and rural communities.

As Oregon takes on the monumental challenge of redressing these impacts, there should be a clear indication from the state legislature that the needs of historically and disproportionately impacted communities will be centered every step of the way.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to vote yes on SCR 17.

Sincerely,

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Climate Policy Associate
PCUN, Oregon's Farmworker Union