



March 18, 2021

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

My name is Akashdeep Singh and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon. As an environmental justice advocate working on behalf of underserved Oregonians, it is my honor and pleasure to write in support of SCR 17.

Oregon has a reputation as an environmental leader but there is always ample opportunity to prove that such a reputation has been earned. A necessary 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, i.e., the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

This resolution indicates that Oregon's leadership is committed to providing our communities with the investment to build a resilient future for generations to come. It indicates our shared connection that future environmental policies need to address the needs of our frontline communities who are Black, Native American, Indigenous and People of Color 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 are products of exclusion from and unequal access to decision-making processes. Events such as the wildfires of this past fall disproportionately impacted historically disadvantaged and underrepresented communities in many rural areas of our state.

SCR 17 recognizes climate trends such as fire, flood and energy system overloads and draws our attention to how communities that have been harmed by unjust and discriminatory siting of pollution, lack of access to public infrastructure, and exposure to other environmental hazards, are now finding themselves bearing the brunt of the climate crisis. As we have seen with the impacts of Covid-19, we need to invest in healthy food, renewable energy infrastructure, clean air and water, good jobs with a family-sustaining wage, and a range of workforce services and skills training.

At the core of an equitable and sustainable society is 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. It helps us achieve 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, 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 take a step towards that regenerative future and 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 that the needs of historically and disproportionately impacted communities will be centered every step of the way. We must improve the public health and well-being of all communities while directly tackling the climate crisis and environmental injustice.

Thank you for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

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