

House Committee on Energy & Environment

Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

March 28, 2021

RE: Support for House Bill 2488 – integrating climate and environmental justice in land use planning

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Members of the Committee:

Oregon Business for Climate is pleased to provide our support for HB 2488.

We are a league of nearly 100 businesses large and small across the state, representing nearly 30,000 employees in a range of industries from manufacturing to agriculture to transportation to healthcare. We believe climate leadership is critical to the health of Oregon's industries and communities, and will help our state re-emerge as a leader thriving in the growing clean economy. To that end, our mission is to advance urgent, ambitious, equitable climate policies designed to help spur innovation and economic opportunity while effectively and responsibly reducing emissions.

There are three key reasons that Oregon Business for Climate supports the current version of HB 2488:

1. It's a foundational element needed for Oregon businesses – critical for effective planning and for resilient, healthy communities that our members serve and in which our members operate.
2. This bill takes the right approach, providing an appropriate mix of clear direction and flexibility for cities.
3. The solution manages the resources needed for implementation by including a smart phase-in process and other implementation options.

Below is further perspective on each of these three considerations.

First, Oregon businesses appreciate the ability to make plans in a stable, thoughtful environment – and our land use planning is a fundamental element of that planning context. HB 2488 supports inclusion of crucial voices in the planning process, bringing in essential considerations that will only become more important as climate change drives increasing impacts, especially in vulnerable populations. Including these considerations and voices, and the broader reality of climate change, makes for smarter, more resilient plans – in which our member businesses can in turn make their own plans to serve and operate in our communities across the state. Ensuring that comp plans consider impacts like flooding in low-lying and often low-income neighborhoods, for example, with the right voices involved, are the kinds of concerns that absolutely must be addressed for our businesses to ensure we have healthy, stable communities in which we operate and where our customers live.

Some opposition business voices assert that climate and equity are already addressed in our planning goals, but experts actually working in both fields – environmental justice and climate advocacy – know from experience in past processes that this assertion is untrue, and that adding climate and equity explicitly into our planning goals is absolutely necessary.

Second, HB 2488 takes a wise approach by not being overly prescriptive. While providing clear guidance and core requirements, the bill also allows local control for Oregon cities and planning experts. The approach identifies crucial planning issues, and opens a door for cities throughout the state to consider these issues in a way that makes sense for their local needs.

Finally, adjustments in the current version of the bill address questions about the resources needed for successful implementation. Larger cities with more resources will implement the direction first, with phases for smaller cities later, and further options for the smallest cities. This enables jurisdictions with more limited resources to plan for this work, to leverage some of the work of larger cities if they choose, and to potentially secure support from federal or other resources in the coming years that will likely be applicable to these needs.

Forward-looking Oregon businesses need a smart, inclusive, resilient context in which to do our own plans. Building the absolutely clear imperatives of climate change and environmental justice into our state land use planning – in a way that flexibly meets differing needs throughout the state – is critical for Oregon communities, and good for Oregon businesses.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Miller", written in a cursive style.

Tim Miller
Director, Oregon Business for Climate