

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Helm and members of the Committee,

My name is Aimee Okotie-Oyekan and I am a 25-year old British-Nigerian immigrant living in Eugene, Oregon. I attend the University of Oregon and I am pursuing a concurrent master's degree in Environmental Studies and Community and Regional Planning. I also work for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Eugene Springfield as their Environmental and Climate Justice Coordinator. I am writing this testimony in support for HB2488-2: Equity and Climate in Land Use.

I look around me and I see nothing short of the beginning of the end. For communities that have historically borne the brunt of socioeconomic, environmental, and public health inequities, watching governments take regressive steps – voter suppression bills, preemptive bills blocking 100% clean energy standards, solidified the notion that my governments were never meant to protect people that look like me. As I sit under the porch of the fourth temporary house my family and I have had to live in since we became houseless in February, all I can think of is “why not now?”.

The time for bold and transformative action for equity and climate is now. For too long, the state of Oregon has tried to side-step addressing its overtly racist past. Communities are still reeling from the compounding inequities brought unto them because of racist and discriminatory land use practices from decades ago. These communities, redlined and relegated, are at greater risk from climate change impacts.

HB 2488 will be a huge step in the right direction and an indication that Oregon is taking a bold stand against both environmental racism and climate change in one fell swoop. HB2488 creates a new Goal 20 to direct local governments to address climate change, achieve environmental justice, and ensure equitable participation of disadvantaged and historically underserved communities in land use decisions. Decision makers will plan with communities, instead of for them. HB 2488 includes measures to address current and projected impacts of climate change through mitigation, adaptation and sequestration methods. In this manner, HB2488 puts us on the path to meet our green house gas reduction goals while promoting climate resilience in historically underserved communities by promoting equitable land responsible land use decisions that at the local level through comprehensive plans, generate increased and more diverse housing supply, dense and efficient infill development, increased non-auto transportation choices, and affordable and accessible public transportation.

Therefore, I implore you to be bold for me, and for all of the other communities of colour and low income communities that are depending on you to protect them, and lay the framework for equitable and climate-responsible land use decisions. HB2488-2 presents the opportunity for Oregon to be a climate and equity leader and I encourage you to pass it.

Sincerely,
Aimee Okotie-Oyekan