

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

February 9, 2021

Testimony in Support of SB 286

Chair Senator Beyer, Vice-Chair Senator Findley, and Member Senators Dembrow, Robinson, and Taylor,

My name is Robin Morris Collin. I am the Norma Paulus Professor of Law at Willamette University College of Law. I am here to urge your support for SB 286 which Renames Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) as Environmental Justice Council.

In 2010, the Oregon Legislature created the EJTF. I served as its founding Chair. We led in the nation in moving our state agencies forward on the path of environmental protection for all Oregonians. As a group of volunteers, the EJTF has reached out to our state's most vulnerable and underserved communities listening to their voices and connecting them to the Governor and our state agencies on environmental issues of concern. As a core part of its mission, EJTF has successfully included low-income communities and all areas of our state in environmental protection. As a result of its success in this mission, the EJTF has been asked to do more for the people of our state.

As the EJTF has been asked to grow, our state investment in its work must also grow. The EJTF has earned this trusted investment. The year 2020 has exposed how under-investment can devastate our communities, our people, and our state's economy. One of the tasks that the EJTF has been asked to lead is to refine and clarify how we measure vulnerability and underinvestment using a leading-edge scientific methodology, cumulative impact analysis. Race and poverty correlate to vulnerability and additional factors including age, health, multiple sources of exposures, geography, work exposures, and other exposures are often layered onto communities and the individuals who live there. Accurately assessing exposures requires a more sophisticated approach that includes a broader variety of risk factors and their cumulative, synergistic effects in order to ensure protection of our communities and their environmental and natural resources.

The additional requests for enhanced, data-based policy recommendations and community participation and engagement require an investment of resources beyond the volunteer staffing that the EJTF has had for the past decade. To continue our leadership in this area of vital national importance, the time has come to reorganize and invest in the work of the EJTF.

I urge your support of this bill for that reason.

With appreciation for your time and attention,

Robin Morris Collin