



Testimony on SB 286

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

February 9, 2021

Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee:

Our organizations represent the state's agricultural and forestry sector. We collectively represent well over \$3.5 billion in inputs into the state's economy, and employ thousands of Oregonians.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on SB 286. We understand that this bill came out of the Environmental Equity Committee of the Racial Justice Council convened by the Governor this summer. We appreciate the representation that the agricultural sector has had in the Environmental Equity Committee and the opportunity to learn more about how our sector can engage with the Committee's important work.

Our sectors have seen a growing interest in environmental justice considerations at both the state and federal level, and also have seen environmental justice raised in recent public comments concerning water rights transactions, forest harvest, CAFO permits, among other issues. We have been working to learn more about how our sectors can proactively engage in this conversation, particularly as it relates to the needs of Oregonians in our rural communities.

We have been told by the Governor's Office and the Department of Environmental Quality that the intent of SB 286 is to formalize a structure and staffing for the current Environmental Justice Task Force within the Department of Environmental Quality and create an "environmental vulnerability assessment tool" that agencies would be able to use as they evaluate environmental justice concerns raised in agency decision making under their current program structures. We also understand that there are amendments coming from the Governor's Office to clarify this intent.

As drafted, it appears that SB 286 goes much further than intended. It requires agencies to understand new rulemaking related to environmental justice, to consolidate authority over environmental justice within the Department of Environmental Quality, and to require the integration of environmental justice considerations into existing permitting and decision-making standards for our natural resource agencies. As it's drafted, we have significant concerns about the impacts that these changes would have on our members' operations and their ability to navigate growing regulatory requirements in our state. We also believe this bill would be incredibly expensive to implement and would result in spillover costs into fee-funded programs that our industries cannot afford after the difficulties we face as we recover from the global pandemic.

We look forward to working with the Governor's Office and the Committee to ensure that the scope and intent of the legislation aligns with its language in order to ensure that state agencies have the tools within their existing programs to more fully evaluate environmental justice concerns as they are raised in public comment and fit those concerns into existing agency standards. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Oregon Farm Bureau, Mary Anne Cooper
Oregon Wheat Growers League, Amanda Hoey
Columbia Gorge Fruit Growers, Nicole Mann
Oregon Water Resources Congress, April Snell
Oregon Association of Nurseries, Elizabeth Remley
Associated Oregon Loggers, Amanda Astor
Oregonians for Food & Shelter, Katie Murray
Oregon Dairy Farmers Association, Tami Kerr
Oregon Cattlemen's Association, Tammy Dennee
Oregon Seed Council, Roger Beyer
Oregon Small Woodlands Association, Roger Beyer
Oregon Forest & Industries Council, Tyler Ernst