



Date: February 7, 2022  
To: House Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
From: Stephanie Phillips, Policy Analyst for the Urban League of Portland  
Re: Environmental Justice for All 2022, HB 4077

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

My name is Stephanie Phillips, and I am a Policy Analyst with the Urban League of Portland and I respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 4077. The Urban League of Portland is one of Oregon's oldest civil rights and social service organizations, empowering African-Americans and others to achieve equality in education, employment, health, economic security and quality of life. We do this by investing in stable housing; through workforce development; community health; education and well-being; for our youth, adults, and seniors. Our culturally specific programs and services, combined with our powerful advocacy and civic engagement, empowers Black communities to thrive across Oregon and SW Washington.

Oregon's environment and climate have changed significantly over the last decade, increasing concerns for environment and climate issues that impact Oregonians. Issues such as energy, air, water, pollution, deforestation, animal endangerment, climate change, fossil fuels, greenhouse gas emissions, natural disasters, wildfires, and many more. Recently, these issues have threatened safety, destroyed lives, and killed people. These issues are serious and will continue to impact all of Oregon. Oregon's communities of color have experienced many of these issues more than others, resulting in long-lasting effects on communities that cross generations. Laws, policies, programs, task forces, and organizations need to assemble to address these issues.

In the 2007 session, SB 420 was passed, creating the Environmental Justice Task Force. Duties and responsibilities of the Environmental Justice Task Force were established. Additionally, SB 420 defined what a natural resource agency consists of and required natural resource agencies to perform certain actions related to environmental justice. Currently, the Environmental Justice Task Force consists of 12 members appointed by the Governor that represent communities of color. But the Environmental Justice Task Force does not have dedicated staff or a centralized system to help agencies analyze environmental justice data and information; data is supposed to be collected to determine the scope of environmental burdens and benefits on Oregon's highly impacted and most vulnerable communities. In 2010, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and U.S. Census Bureau data, Portland State University's Population Research Center (PRC) found a spatial correlation between the location of known or contaminated sites and those census tracts with high percentages of Black Portland residents. Roughly 84% of the Black population lived within three-quarters of a mile of a known or potentially contaminated site. With continued gentrification, recent environmental and climate changes, we need to know how the Black community is being impacted. We need real-time data and support for the Black community to combat environmental justice. By employing the Environmental Justice Task Force with dedicated staff and a centralized means of data analysis, we would be able to respond to the needs of our communities.

The Environmental Justice Task Force is lacking structure, resources, data collection and management, action, preparation, and support. Resulting in communities of color continuing to be vulnerable and experiencing environmental injustice. By passing HB 4077, the Environmental Justice Task Force will be revamped to the Environmental Justice Council and



the changes made will give the Task Force the ability to serve the growing demands for environmental justice. Agency level staff positions will be available to support the Council and work on creating the mapping tool for data. The mapping tool will measure environmental science and health data, with socioeconomic information natural resource agencies will help provide. The definition of “natural resource agencies” will be expanded to include the Department of Energy and similar organizations as appropriate. Lastly, the staff will be able to centralize information and data to advise natural resource agencies for environmental justice work.

The government has a task force to combat environmental justice, but the task force needs to be revamped to better serve Oregon. Oregonians are relying on you, especially communities of color who are most impacted by environmental injustices.

Respectfully,

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