

February 4, 2022

To: House Committee On Environment and Natural Resources

From: Avery Burstein, Salem

Re: Environmental Justice and HB 4077

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

My name is Avery Burstein, I live in Salem and attend Willamette University. I am writing today in support of HB 4077 the Environmental Justice for all bill. I am passionate about policy which pushes forward environmental justice for all Oregonians. In order to create and implement a just plan for the future of Oregon's environment, we need region-specific data and dedicated resources to continue bridging connections between state agencies and the public to raise concerns brought by environmental justice communities.

Last legislative session we saw the passing of HB 2021 and HB 2842 which are amazing wins for the environmental justice community. HB 2021 will invest \$50 million into community-based renewable energy projects and ensures clean energy job training opportunities are maximized for communities of color, rural communities, and low-income communities in Oregon. Without an effective and comprehensive mapping system the equitable distribution of these resources will be far more difficult to accomplish. The Environmental Justice Task Force, established in 2007, has done amazing work to push forward environmental justice within state agencies. However they lack the adequate resources and infrastructure to continue their work. By elevating the task force to a council it would enhance its ability to meet the growing demands for environmental justice with full support from the state. Creating a vulnerability map means there is a readily accessible and comprehensive system to access pertinent demographic data. Without which it is difficult to determine the scope of environmental burdens and impacts on Oregon's most vulnerable communities.

States like California and Washington already have mapping systems. Washington's Environmental Health Disparities Map is an interactive and publicly accessible equity map. According to Dr. Sabel at the Washington State Department of Health the EHD map has been used in various ways. In the Department of Health they have used it to determine where Early Care and Education sites are near environmental contamination with a goal of protecting children

and staff from harmful environmental substances. The EHD isn't just useful to state agencies, it can also be used by advocacy groups who lack in-house research departments and can use the map to improve engagement efforts. The Communities of Color Coalition did just this to assist in distributing funds provided by a COVID-19 Rapid Development Grant. As we can see from Washington a powerful mapping system is an indispensable way to further equity.

Please join me in supporting HB 4077 by voting yes. It is time that the Legislature recognizes the immediate need that vulnerable communities have for an environmental justice infrastructure at the state level. Our community members deserve the peace of mind that environmental justice advocates have the resources to make equitable decisions, especially in the midst of countless natural disasters and an ongoing pandemic.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Avery Burstein, Salem.