



To: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

From: Julia DeGraw, Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Date: 2/6/2022

RE: SUPPORT of HB 4077, Environmental Justice for All

Chair Marsh, and Vice Chairs Hudson and Smith, and Members of the House Environment and Natural Resources Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 4077. On behalf of our thousands of members and supporters in Oregon, we would like to register the Oregon Conservation Network's strong support to pass HB 4077 to establish an Environmental Justice Task Force in the Governor's office and provide resources for environmental justice data-mapping.

The Oregon Conservation Network (OCN) is coordinated through the Oregon League of Conservation Voters (OLCV). OCN is a coalition of 37 not-for-profit organizations throughout the state, united to advocate for pro-conservation legislation and to fight policies that threaten our state's natural legacy. OCN is powered by tens of thousands of Oregonians who belong to their membership organizations. We work to promote policies that will ensure a better Oregon for our children – and to fight policies that do not.

We support HB 4077 because we know that 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.

The Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) was created through SB 420 (2007) and serves as an advisory body of environmental justice scholars and community leaders. The EJTF has been the preeminent resource for natural resource agencies to better serve environmental justice communities for more than a decade. Now is the time for Oregon to commit to environmental justice action for every part of the state by changing the EJTF to the Environmental Justice Council and housing it in the Governor's office with the additional resources it needs to better serve Oregonians.

The EJTF is currently charged with advising the Governor and natural resource agencies on environmental justice issues, including community concerns and public participation processes, and identifying environmental justice communities that may be affected by decisions made by state agencies. The Task Force acts as the connection between state agencies and the public to raise concerns brought by environmental justice communities. **Despite all that, the Task Force serves without a budget or staff.** With dedicated resources, the EJTF – revitalized as the Environmental Justice Council – would be better supported to reach environmental justice communities across Oregon.

Without adequate data it is difficult to determine the scope of environmental burdens and impacts on Oregon’s environmental justice communities and most vulnerable communities because there is no cohesive and well-coordinated initiative to bring information on environmental justice parameters into one comprehensive and readily accessible structure. HB 4077 will help address that issue by directing the Council to oversee creation of a science and health data mapping tool, with socioeconomic information provided through the Department of Environmental Quality and Oregon Health Authority, and working with the Institute of Natural Resources and the DAS Geospatial Enterprise Office (GEO).

Lasly, OCN and OLCV support HB 4077 because it requires the Council to assist in community engagement and outreach to inform statewide environmental vulnerability assessment tool. Environmental Justice communities are the ones impacted the first and worst by climate change, pollution, and other unsafe and unjust public health risks, and engaging these communities in this process is key to ensuring better outcomes for these communities and for all Oregonians.

Our state cannot afford to not invest in environmental justice, especially in the midst of countless natural disasters and an ongoing pandemic. An Environmental Justice Task Force and data-mapping will be the first steps towards actualizing this goal. Please invest in environmental justice and support HB 4077.

We urge you to support HB 4077 to help ensure environmental justice for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Julia B. DeGraw
Coalition Director
Oregon Conservation Network, and Oregon League of Conservation Voters

Testimony Submitted On behalf of all the OCN Member Organizations:

1000 Friends of Oregon, Association of Oregon Recyclers, Audubon Society of Portland, Beyond Toxics, Cascadia Wildlands, Center for Biological Diversity, Center for Food Safety, Central Oregon LandWatch, Climate Solutions, Defenders of Wildlife, Engineers for a Sustainable Future, The Environmental Center, Environment Oregon, Friends of Mount Hood, Friends of the Columbia Gorge, Greater Hells Canyon Council, League of Women Voters of Oregon, Native Fish Society, Neighbors for Clean Air, Oceana, Oregon



Coast Alliance, Oregon Environmental Council, Oregon Land and Water Alliance, Oregon League of Conservation Voters, Oregon Natural Desert Association, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, Oregon Shores Conservation Coalition, Oregon Wild, Pew Charitable Trusts, Renewable Northwest, Rogue Riverkeeper, Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, The Street Trust, Surfrider Foundation, Trout Unlimited, Tualatin Riverkeepers, WaterWatch of Oregon, Wild Salmon Center