

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Hudson and Brock Smith, members of the committee. For the record my name is Ben Duncan and I join you today as a founding appointee and current liaison to the Environmental Justice Task Force on behalf of the Oregon Commission on Black Affairs. It's a privilege to have a few moments to share my support for HB 4077, Environmental Justice for All.

In 2007, when Senator Avel Gordly worked to pass SB 420 that for the first time created statute in Oregon resulting in structure around environmental justice, including the formation of the EJ Task Force, language requiring state agencies to consider environmental justice impacts when making decisions, requirements to engage communities who were impacted, built internal capacity through a citizen liaison position, and charged the EJ Task Force with advising the governor and natural resource agencies on environmental justice—I was there alongside many who had contributed to that success.

And for the last 14 years, the EJ task force has worked in partnership with agencies, has toured the state hearing from impacted communities, and has provided guidance and advice to agencies and the Governor's office. As a founding appointee, I've had the opportunity to see our successes and clarity around where we could strengthen this work.

I've also seen the burdens that have been the root of environmental justice play out in low income, communities of color, rural and other vulnerable communities. Longstanding concerns with air pollution, lead exposure, and other environmental risks have combined with wildfires and heat waves, housing and food insecurity, a reckoning around racial justice, and a global health pandemic—that serve as a reminder that our work to create an Oregon where every resident can reach their full health potential is still our collective challenge.

HB4077 does two really important things for Oregon. First- it solidifies and provides resources for an Environmental Justice Council - building upon the EJTF model. Following what has been a nationally recognized and collaborative relationship with agencies as the Environmental Justice Task Force, this shift will provide sustainability and state investments to meet the moment in time we face and ensure that the voices and experiences of those most negatively impacted by environmental hazards have an increased influence in decisions. Empowering the EJ council to engage

stakeholders in the mapping tool development process is an opportunity I support, and feel can set a foundation of trust and accountability.

And this environmental justice mapping tool will result in better data collection to inform state agencies as they make decisions that impact environmental justice communities by layering environmental health data and socioeconomic factors. —a consideration of impact that is already laid out in statute in ORS 182.545—And while a tool in itself does not make decisions for state agencies or legislators, it can help advance better public participation between community and government by specifically understanding who is impacted, and will help us assess, analyze and understand the lived environments and potential impacts on those populations that have, for too long, borne the burden of environmental hazard—I'm also appreciative of the thoughtfulness of ensuring that this council represents the full range and perspectives of EJ communities across our state—including seats dedicated to Advocacy Commissions and youth voice, lifting up rural, coastal and remote stakeholders who have all too often felt neglected in environmental policy conversations.

I'm excited for the possibility of this moment, to take another step forward in our journey towards social, racial and environmental justice. It's a gift we give to the the generations coming behind us to live in a more healthy, more safe, and more resilient Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony, I'm happy to answer any questions.