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House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Testimony in support of HB 4077

Submitted by Amelia Porterfield, Director of Government Relations

Chair Marsh and Members of the Committee:

We write to express our support of HB 4077 with the -2 amendments, which expands the capacity of the Environmental Justice Council (formerly Environmental Justice Task Force) and directs the Council to develop an environmental justice mapping tool.

The Nature Conservancy in Oregon (TNC) is a science-based, non-partisan organization with 80,000 supporters and members in every county. Based in communities around the state, we manage lands and waters in varied ecosystems and partner with tribes, ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature.

Environmental justice communities experience disproportionate impacts from climate change and these impacts are often exacerbated by historic inequities. Longstanding systemic barriers to racial and socioeconomic equity persist within Oregon, and we believe the state has a responsibility to ensure that steps are taken to dismantle structural inequalities. We see HB 4077 as an opportunity to take meaningful steps forward for the following reasons:

- A well-resourced Environmental Justice Council is critical for supporting natural resource agencies in their efforts to serve environmental justice communities in Oregon.
- A state-specific mapping tool is essential to providing sufficient, consistent support to environmental justice communities, including those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Consolidating relevant data and indicators in one location with a level of granularity that existing federal tools can't provide will be an incredible resource for organizations and governments across the state looking to prioritize investment in the places that need it most.
- The inclusive community engagement process detailed in the -2 amendment is a chance to model the best practice of ground-truthing mapping tools with community data and experiences, a critical step for building a trusted and accurate tool.

We thank the Governor for bringing this legislation forward and encourage the legislature to enact it this session. Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments.