



Oregon Pediatric Society

A Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Incorporated in Oregon

DATE: March 1, 2023

TO: Rep. Pam Marsh, Chair
Reps. Bobby Levy and Emerson Levy, Vice-Chairs
Members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment

FROM: Lauren J. Herbert, MD, FAAP
Oregon Pediatric Society Member

SUBJECT: Support for HB 3152 – Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

I am a pediatrician in Springfield and a member of the Oregon Pediatric Society, the state chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. I am writing in strong support of House Bill 3152, which will decrease subsidies for gas appliances in residential homes. This is an important energy policy for Oregon and will support the state's goals in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

In my clinic, I am already seeing the effects of climate change, in both the mental health and physical health of patients. The acute psychological distress of those who lost homes and neighborhoods in the Holiday Farm Fire in the fall of 2020 was almost palpable when I entered the exam rooms of children from those communities who came in with smoke-related medical issues. While the devastating loss of homes to fire has affected many in Oregon, many more are affected by the changes that have occurred as climate change has progressed. The recurrent forest fires, weeks of unhealthy air and temperature, and destruction of our land and communities has contributed to higher levels of chronic psychologic distress. Many teens express hopelessness and despair about the future, and the sense that adults are not doing all they can to reverse this climate crisis path contributes to their despair.

The increase in wildfires have led to more smoke-related illnesses, with not only more asthma exacerbations but also more severe viral respiratory illnesses. One example that stands out to me is the case of a previously healthy 5-year-old boy from Oakridge. That community suffered weeks of severe forest fire smoke in late summer 2022. During this time, the boy developed a viral respiratory illness. He was seen in the emergency room and given asthma medications. Despite these medications, his oxygen levels declined, and he required hospitalization for supplemental oxygen. It is unusual for a child with no underlying illness to be hospitalized with this kind of viral infection. Smoke exposure is known to increase the risk of lower respiratory tract infections and likely contributed to this child's severe illness.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recognizes that rising temperatures are causing major environmental changes across the planet, and that climate change is a result of contemporary human activity. While these changes threaten all human life, children are more vulnerable because they breathe faster, spend more time outdoors, and are



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susceptible to toxins during critical periods of development. Climate change is associated with increased incidence of asthma, allergies, heat-related illnesses, and some infectious diseases.

We do not have time to wait and must do all we can to decrease carbon emissions. HB3152 is a good step in the right direction. The Oregon Pediatric Society and I urge you to vote yes.

Sincerely,

Lauren J. Herbert, MD