

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
re: SB 91**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council support for SB 91

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith and members of the committee,

On behalf of its thousands of members throughout the state, Oregon Environmental Council writes to express our support for SB 91 as well as our appreciation for Senator Sollman's leadership in authoring this legislation. SB 91 seeks to phase out Aqueous Film-Forming Foam (AFFF) containing toxic Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances commonly known as PFAS. This foam is utilized to extinguish flammable liquid fires, as well as for training exercises. There is significant risk to the health of the firefighters who come into contact with the PFAS chemicals contained in this type of foam. Moreover, AFFF can also harm the public when these chemicals contaminate water and travel throughout the environment. Fluorine free foam now exists and Oregon airports, and some fire stations, have already made the change.

Known as "forever" chemicals because they do not break down, the health impacts from PFAS chemicals include an increased risk of cancer, high cholesterol, liver damage, thyroid problems, weakened immune systems, fertility problems, high blood pressure during pregnancy, and low birth weight and neurodevelopmental effects for developing children, thyroid and liver impacts, and fertility issues. Many of these health issues are on the rise for the public at large: cancer and heart disease are the leading causes of death in Oregon.

For firefighters, there is a 9% higher risk of being diagnosed with cancer and a 14% higher risk of dying from cancer than the general U.S. population. Sudden cardiac death is also a leading cause of death among firefighters, accounting for 45% of on-duty fatalities. Cardiovascular disease kills firefighters at 1.7 times the rate of the general public. PFAS contributes to both of these statistics because it can cancer and raise cholesterol, impacting heart health. Fighting fires is by definition, dangerous work and while firefighters have other work related exposures, PFAS-laden firefighting foam is one exposure that we have the ability to remove from the equation.

By enacting SB 91, Oregon will be joining the majority of states that have already passed policies reducing or eliminating use of firefighting foam that contains PFAS chemicals, including: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin. SB 91 is an important action which the state can take to ensure firefighters no longer experience preventable workplace exposure to PFAS in the form of AFFF foam, and over the long term, SB 91 also removes this source of pollution from Oregon's environment. This will mean a healthier Oregon, not just for the firefighters who protect our lives and property, but for all of us.

SB 91 will ensure Oregon continues its leadership in protecting firefighters and preventing harm to the environment and the public from these toxic chemicals.

Thank you again for considering this important legislation and Oregon Environmental Council's testimony on taking this important step.

Sincerely,

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