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On Behalf Of:  
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Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB680

A large percentage of Oregonians agree that climate change is real and that we all need to find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that warm the planet and cause climate change. That "we" needs to include individuals, government agencies, and private sector companies that sell goods and services to the public. When companies sell goods and/or services that purport to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants but don't actually do so -- that's greenwashing.

From the United Nations website page on Climate Action: "Greenwashing presents a significant obstacle to tackling climate change. By misleading the public to believe that a company or other entity is doing more to protect the environment than it is, greenwashing promotes false solutions to the climate crisis that distract from and delay concrete and credible action." This UN warning goes on to list methods companies use to engage in greenwashing:

- Claiming to be on track to reduce a company's polluting emissions to net zero when no credible plan is actually in place.
- Being purposely vague or non-specific about a company's operations or materials used.
- Applying intentionally misleading labels such as "green" or "eco-friendly," which do not have standard definitions and can be easily misinterpreted.
- Implying that a minor improvement has a major impact or promoting a product that meets the minimum regulatory requirements as if it is significantly better than the standard.
- Emphasizing a single environmental attribute while ignoring other impacts.
- Claiming to avoid illegal or non-standard practices that are irrelevant to a product.
- Communicating the sustainability attributes of a product in isolation of brand activities (and vice versa) – e.g. a garment made from recycled materials that is produced in a high-emitting factory that pollutes the air and nearby waterways.

These kinds of specious claims seriously undermine genuine efforts to address climate change and cheat folks who pay for the goods and services.

I like that this bill would allow plaintiffs who have been cheated by untrue claims to file lawsuits and, if they can prove their claims, the greenwashers would be liable to pay a small fine of \$200. The fine would be rather symbolic, but it would give the plaintiffs (and I would hope, state officials too) a good way to publicize the offensive greenwashing and put a spotlight on these offenses and the companies that commit them.

Thank you for considering my testimony!

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