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Testimony supporting House Bill 3580

Co-Chair Helm, Co-Chair Owens and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

As I have noted previously, Southern Oregon Climate Action Now is a grassroots climate organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians. We are concerned about the climate crisis and seek federal, state and local action to address it. We are rural and coastal Southern Oregonians who live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of our concern, we pay close attention to efforts nationally, statewide, and locally that impact our collective efforts to address the climate crisis. As our logo above indicates, the focus of SOCAN is to promote action through science.

Bogeburg 2025 aptly states: "Estuary sediments can store carbon 10 times as quickly as sediments in forests and, if undisturbed, they can store carbon below ground for thousands of years. Coastal habitats that capture and store this "blue carbon" in marine plants and sediments include mangroves, sea grasses and estuaries." When thinking of natural climate solutions and carbon storage in our natural and working lands, maybe because we are terrestrial organisms, we often turn our minds immediately to regenerative agriculture and forests. This statement reminds us to think also of blue carbon stored in wetlands, marshes, estuaries and coastal zones. If we were beavers or sea otters, maybe our immediate response would be the reverse. The value of the locations is echoed by RAE (2024) with "Coastal blue carbon refers to the greenhouse gasses sequestered, stored, and emitted by coastal wetlands, such as salt marshes, mangrove forests, and seagrass beds, helping to mitigate the effects of climate change." and "…blue carbon is a tool for defense against climate change that can only come from estuary and coastal habitats."

As NOAA (2024) reports: "Two common seagrasses that occur on the West Coast are eelgrass (genus *Zostera*) and surfgrass (genus *Phyllospadix*), with eelgrass being the most prevalent and occurring in Washington, Oregon, and California. We also learn that these are the only flowering plants (angiosperms) that thrive in marine environments.

ESA (2022) report substantial carbon storage in eelgrass habitats in San Diego Bay. Tomassoni (2024), meanwhile, reports that seagrasses capture carbon much more rapidly than rainforests. Additionally,EAC (2024) reports eelgrass meadows "…help fight climate change by sequestering carbon and protecting our coasts from storm surge and erosion." These last two phenomena, it should be noted, are likely to increase as sea level rises (Rutgers 2024) increasing the value of eelgrass as a natural adaptive tool.

As a bonus, it is worth noting that eelgrass meadows serve as valuable habitat for many marine species (Oceans 2025), including sea otters (e.g., Main 2021; Wong 2023).

California and Washington have active programs to protect and restore eelgrass; but not Oregon (NOAA 2024). HB3580 would represent a first step towards remedying that omission.

For the above reasons Southern Oregon Climate Action Now urges support for HB3580.

Respectfully Submitted

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