

Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee

My name is John Christensen, and my wife and I are stewards of our forested property in Corbett. We support SJR-28, because the right to a healthy environment and climate stability cannot be taken for granted, but must be enshrined in Oregon's Constitution. During the Eagle Creek fire of 2017, we and many of our neighbors in Corbett had to evacuate our homes and property. Although we were fortunate in having a last minute change in wind direction that spared Corbett, many Oregonians in recent years have not been so fortunate and have lost their properties to wildfires that have become more frequent and intense due to climate change.

The effects of the climate crisis on human health are significant. They include heat-related illnesses and deaths; increased floods and droughts; the spread of infectious diseases to wider geographical ranges; a longer duration of seasonal allergies; cardiac and respiratory problems due to increased ground-level ozone concentrations and smoke from wildfires; increases in water-related diseases as water scarcity and rising sea levels lead to freshwater contamination; and the threat to human health and well-being by the more violent storms associated with warming.

The root cause of the influx of asylum seekers in the US and Europe is climate change. Drought conditions leading to the scarcity of arable land, and the consequent resource wars, have displaced millions of people globally.

A stabilized climate is just one of the many environmental benefits that would be enshrined in the Right to a Healthy Environment Amendment. Oregon must look beyond the barriers often erected by those whose vision is limited by the next election cycle or biennium. It is time to take the long view and do the right thing for ourselves, our children, grandchildren, and all future generations of Oregonians. As Hippocrates said in the 5th century BCE, "If you want to learn about the health of a population, look at the air they breathe, the water they drink, and the places where they live."