



Senate Committee On Rules

RE: Support for SJR 28, Right to a Healthy Environment Constitutional Amendment.

March 24, 2025

Dear Chair Jama, Vice-Chair Bonham, and Members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

My name is Isabela, and I am the Policy and Communications Director at Next Up Action Fund. Our mission is to build political power with diverse young people to achieve a more just and equitable Oregon. As an organization that builds political power and strong, effective leadership pipelines for diverse young people, our work and our communities depend on a safe and healthy environment to live long and healthy lives.

Thus, I am writing in strong support of SJR 28, the Right to a Healthy Environment (RTHE) Constitutional Amendment. Oregonians' lives and futures depend on a safe and healthy environment. This amendment incorporates this key value into our State constitution. If passed, the State government will be required to prevent environmental threats to the health and safety of all Oregonians.

Passing the RTHE amendment will give agencies and their lawyers the power to address threats to our health and safety proactively. The current system limits them to waiting for a public outcry before addressing urgent environmental threats – a recipe for continuous disasters.

With huge climate threats looming, action needs to be taken now. Preventing environmental disasters is much less costly than cleaning up after disasters. In the next few decades, Oregon's farms, forests and fisheries are at risk of being devastated by environmental disasters, affecting thousands of Oregonians.

In just the last decade, there have been record wildfires in Oregon, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Washington, Wyoming, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas/Oklahoma, Tennessee, Kansas, Hawaii and more. The Oregon 2020 wildfires displaced hundreds of families and destroyed acres of land. The science is clear that increased temperatures and droughts in the West and North America, generally caused by climate change, are responsible for the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires. The Oregon Legislature cannot sit idly by and allow this threat to Oregonians to go unaddressed.

Every person, including children and future generations, deserves access to clean water and air, to live free from smoke/fires and other effects of climate change and to continue pursuing our livelihoods.

For all of these reasons, we urge your strong support of SJR 28. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and for your service to Oregon communities.

Thank you,

Isabela Villarreal
Policy and Communications Director