

Dear Chair Jama and members of the Senate Committee on Rules:

As an educator and youth/community organizer dedicated to advocating for reasonable and just environmental actions in our state, I am writing today to urge you to seriously consider the benefits of passing SJR-28-1, the Right to a Healthy Environment. It is beyond timely that we integrate this right to environmental protections for current and future generations, not to mention the non-human species we are interdependent with and rely on for a functioning ecosystem.

Oregonians' lives and futures depend on a safe and healthy environment. This amendment puts this key value, that all Oregonians hold, into our State constitution. If passed by the voters, the State government will be required to do a better job to prevent environmental threats to the health and safety of Oregonians. RTHE makes our state and local governments' responsibility to protect Oregonians from human-caused environmental harm EXPLICIT in our Constitution. Protecting our communities should be our highest government's highest priority. RTHE clears the way for our leaders to do what must be done to protect our lives and futures.

When the U.S. and Oregon constitutions were written, pollution meant nuisance issues like the smell of hog farms or water pollution from tanneries. Today, the health and safety of Oregonians are threatened by toxic pollutants in the air, water and soil and by climate change. This is about updating our constitution, and our rights, to protect us against the greatest threats we face today.

In addition to the limited effectiveness of Oregon's current regulatory system, it also depends heavily on federal environmental laws including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the Environmental Protection Agency's definitions of toxic levels to regulate our air, water, ecosystems, and climate systems. These bedrock environmental laws could be in severe jeopardy with the new administration's general approach against effective environmental protection.

There are so many other valid and important benefits I could list in support of SJR-28-1, but I will keep my testimony brief. I believe you all love our state and the beautiful and important natural resources it provides—it's time to create effective legal protections so that future generations can also have a livable and secure future for their environment.

Respectfully,

Tami Darden
Co-Director Partners for Sustainable Schools
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