

RE: Strong Support for SJR 28 – The Oregon Environmental Rights Amendment

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

We, the nine members of the [Oregon Educators for Climate Education](#) (OECE) Steering Committee, write in strong support of Senate Joint Resolution 28 (SJR 28), which would enshrine every Oregonian's fundamental right to clean air, clean water, and a safe climate in our state constitution. This amendment, championed by the grassroots Oregon Coalition for an Environmental Rights Amendment (OCERA), affirms a value that has long defined Oregon's identity: a deep, abiding commitment to environmental stewardship and self-reliance.

While we are astonished that such a fundamental right would face opposition, we acknowledge the concerns of some Oregonians—especially those in natural resource industries—who have felt the economic consequences of past environmental policies. The timber industry, in particular, was left struggling in the 1980s, as federal and state regulations, however necessary for long-term sustainability, failed to provide adequate economic transition support. We recognize that history and believe that Oregon must never again allow rural communities to bear the burden of necessary change alone.

SJR 28 is not an anti-business measure; rather, it is a pro-Oregon measure. It aligns with the successful, forward-thinking efforts of organizations like [Wallowa Resources](#) and the [Lake County Resource Initiative](#), both of which transformed economic adversity into leadership in sustainable resource management. These examples prove that Oregon can prosper while protecting our natural environment—that we do not have to choose between economic success and ecological integrity. They tell their stories in the documentary, [Other Side of the Hill](#).

Some opponents have raised concerns about the language of the bill, particularly regarding the definitions of "safe" and "clean." These are important discussions, and we are confident that they can be addressed through the legislative process. However, we urge this committee not to lose sight of the core principle at stake: Oregonians deserve a constitutional guarantee that their health and environment will not be sacrificed for short-term interests.

Other states, including Pennsylvania, Montana, and Hawaii, have already enshrined environmental rights in their constitutions. In doing so, they have strengthened their ability to protect public lands, defend against federal overreach, and ensure long-term economic stability. Oregon has long led the nation in environmental leadership and innovation; SJR 28 provides an opportunity to reaffirm that leadership in a way that benefits all communities—rural and urban alike.

At a time when environmental degradation threatens both [public health](#) and [economic stability](#), we cannot afford to leave these protections to chance. SJR 28 ensures that future generations inherit an Oregon as vibrant and abundant as the one we cherish today.

We urge you to advance this resolution and to reaffirm the values that have made Oregon strong: independence, innovation, and stewardship.

Sincerely,

Oregon Educators for Climate Education (OECE)
Steering Committee