

Submitter: Susan Heath
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SJR28

Dear Chair Jama and Vice-Chair Bonham, and esteemed members of the Committee, thank you for taking my testimony in support of SJR28-1, Right to a Healthy Environment.

I have been concerned about our environment from a very young age, and as I learned more about climate change and have observed it accelerating over the last decade, I knew I needed to become involved with the political process in order to address it. As someone who moved here from rural Ohio and has advocated for rural equity over the years, I've also experienced how environmental issues can negatively impact our rural neighbors and their way of life.

When I learned about the possibility of adding an environmental rights amendment to our Oregon Constitution almost two years ago, I decided to help advocate for it in whatever manner I could. After helping to form the Oregon Coalition for an Environmental Rights Amendment in January of 2024, I have educated myself on how green amendments can serve our communities and state.

Environmental Rights language laid out in state constitutions has been cited successfully in courts in three other states to protect the rights of everyone, including children and future generations. Our legal team has closely followed developments in states with and without environmental rights in their constitutions, and have learned what language is needed to protect us without leading to frivolous lawsuits. The language provided in this referral bill is the strongest and most equitable in our country.

Oregonians, including those living and working in rural areas that are being increasingly harmed by climate and other environmental issues, deserve the right to a safe and healthy environment. We also all deserve the right to educate ourselves and vote on the proposed amendment. Please pass SJR28 and allow us to explicitly enshrine environmental rights into our Constitution.

Thank you for your consideration.

Most sincerely,
Susan Heath,
OCERA Strategy Team volunteer

