

Submitter: Nick Keenan

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 am a father of two children. When our sky turned orange, and our friends in Ashland lost their homes to wildfire, and our neighbors passed away due to extreme heat, all over the last few years, my kids asked me what we were going to do. I did not have a good answer for them.

I have an unusual privilege as an Oregonian to have the capacity to observe testimony in legislative sessions and rulemaking sessions, from ODEQ to OPUC. I have observed in the last few years when excellent forward-looking science-based laws like 2021 HB 2021 be passed, to only then be the subject of targeted attacks in rulemaking by well-funded fossil fuel companies who can dedicate constant staff and resources to dismantling those climate protections and interventions. It's like a game of whack-a-mole, and our children and grandchildren don't have sufficient legal recourse for decisions that permanently harm their way of life in 10, 30, or 90 years.

Our legal and economic systems aren't built to consider the realities of science, or the long term implications of extractive enterprise as we run out of air and ocean capacity to dump our pollution. These companies do not have a right to pollute, but we act like it. Our systems are designed to consider the short and medium term - the next quarterly profits, the next biennium budget.

Allowing the RTHE amendment to have an up or down vote by Oregonians on the next ballot will give agencies and their lawyers the power to proactively address threats to our health and safety. The current system limits them to waiting for a public outcry before addressing urgent environmental threats. That public doesn't have capacity to be in multiple four hour technical rulemaking sessions during a workday. That is a recipe for continuous environmental disasters. It is far less costly both to our finances and our health to prevent environmental harm than to clean it up afterwards.

I encourage you to support SJR 28, and would like to thank the committee for considering this resolution. And my children would like to add their voice:

"Our future is unknown, and we need to take care of the environment as much as we can now to help future generations." - Lucas, 12.

"Every bit of pollution we put into our earth can result in harms to the animals and plants that keep our environment going." - Amelia, 9.