

Testimony to the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment**March 31, 2025****Jay Ward, Interim Director of Programs, Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and for future generations.

Regarding House Bill 3940

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Levy and Gamba and members of the committee:

On behalf of Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) and its thousands of members throughout the state, I write to convey our opposition to House Bill 3940 as currently drafted. OEC understands and agrees with the need for Oregon to fund and carry out wildfire prevention, suppression, and mitigation measures. While fire is an historical and necessary component of Oregon's wildland ecosystems, recent events such as the 2020 Labor Day fires in the North Santiam Canyon and the Almeda fire in Jackson County demonstrate that in many places, conditions no longer allow for normal fire behavior. Sadly, climate change and other anthropogenic practices have resulted in some areas being beset by conditions where fire can no longer function within its historic range of variability. Oregon can and should act to reduce the conflagration risk to communities, homes and structures proximate to such landscapes. OEC strongly supports such risk reduction actions, especially in and around rural homes and communities in the Wildland Urban Interface. Much of HB 3940 seeks to do just that.

However, the funding mechanism envisioned by HB 3940—a non-refundable increase in the beverage container deposit, while well-intentioned, is the wrong remedy.

OEC was founded in 1968, three years before Oregon's landmark Bottle Bill was enacted. Many of our members were active supporters of the original Bottle Bill and its subsequent improvements in 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2020 and 2022. OEC and our members highly value the environmental benefits which the Bottle Bill delivers by removing millions of containers from our rivers, byways and natural areas.

However, by increasing the per-bottle deposit and prohibiting Oregonians from being able to fully recoup that expense, HB 3940 could create enmity where none today exists, and by doing so undermine the solid foundation of public support which the Bottle Bill currently enjoys. Moreover, there is no rational policy nexus between the highly successful bottle recycling program and HB 3940 wildfire treatment provisions.

OEC is aware of a -2 amendment which would remove the problematic Bottle Bill-related funding mechanism. OEC urges the committee to adopt the -2 amendment and preserve the integrity of Oregon's landmark Bottle Bill and the many benefits it delivers to our state. Absent the adoption of the -2 amendment, OEC urges the committee to reject HB 3940 and not to move the bill forward.

Thank you for considering Oregon Environmental Council's perspective in this matter and for your commitment to a cleaner and healthier Oregon

Sincerely,



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