



CLEAN WATER. HEALTHY RIVERS.

April 7, 2025

Columbia Riverkeeper's Testimony to the Senate Energy and Environment Committee in Support of SB 1187. Submitted by Teryn Yazdani, Staff Attorney.

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in **strong support of Senate Bill (SB) 1187 to Make Polluters Pay**. Columbia Riverkeeper is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and restoring the Columbia River and all life associated with it, from its headwaters to the Pacific Ocean. Columbia Riverkeeper has over 25,000 members and supporters in Oregon who live, work, and recreate throughout the Columbia River Basin. We engage with river communities and advocate for strong environmental and climate protections through legal, policy, and organizing work.

In Oregon, the damages from climate change are increasingly costly to community health and the environment. The cost of the climate crisis often falls onto the shoulders of those who are not responsible for the damage and communities already bearing the brunt of the economic and environmental impacts of climate change. The major fossil fuel companies created pollution that contributes to a warming climate and worsening weather disasters for Oregonians, including drought and water insecurity, climate-fueled wildfires, and unprecedented heat domes. Their actions also create mounting costs for public health, adaptation of infrastructure, protecting environmental health, and natural resource economies.

SB 1187 would require large fossil fuel corporations to pay compensation for past climate damages and shift the burden of paying for degradation from the communities to those responsible for creating the pollution. "Polluter pays" is a core principle of environmental law, and it is only fair. The approach is analogous to other, well-established federal and state programs that impose strict liability for cleaning up past pollution. Comparable Climate Superfund bills have been enacted in Vermont and New York and are being considered in several other US states.

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Under SB 1187, the largest polluters will pay, meaning the largest multinational companies that sell oil, gas, and coal in Oregon will be liable. Climate change adaptation and response have already cost Oregon billions of dollars, with projections getting worse over the coming years. Presently, Oregon taxpayers must pay all of these costs, even as fossil fuel companies have turned profits from the last 30 years of emissions. This is an unfair model, and those who cause damage must contribute to the costs.

The funds created by this legislation can be used for a wide variety of climate damage mitigation and adaptation, to be developed by the Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plan. This bill will allow the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD) to develop a road map for Oregon's adaptation and resilience that will create a framework for the use of the Superfund. This will likely include wildfire adaptation and resilience, flood prevention and protection, upgrades to transportation infrastructure, disaster preparedness, water supply and wastewater treatment systems, agriculture, forestry and fisheries, building retrofits, and investing in the health of forests and other ecosystems. This will help increase Oregon's resilience and help take the monetary burden of climate change off of communities.

For the reasons above, I **strongly urge you to support and pass SB 1187**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Teryn Yazdani
Staff Attorney