

Testimony to the House Committee on Revenue**May 1, 2025****Re: House Bill 3940A****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 future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council opposition to HB 3940A

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters and members of the committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) and our members throughout the state. OEC strongly opposes HB 3940A as currently drafted.

OEC understands and agrees with the need for Oregon to fund and carry out thoughtful 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 created 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.

However, the funding mechanism envisioned by HB 3940A—a non-refundable increase and redirection of state beverage container deposit revenues, while well-intentioned, is the wrong remedy.

OEC was founded in 1968, three years before the initial Bottle Bill was introduced. Those early OEC members worked to support the bill as they understood the benefits of removing millions of beverage containers from our rivers, byways and natural areas. In 1971, your predecessors responded by passing the landmark Bottle Bill and by subsequently adopting improvements in 2007, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2020 and 2022. The results have been nothing short of astounding. Today, the Bottle Bill, like our public beaches, is one of the attributes which makes Oregon such a special place to live.

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

OEC is aware of -8 and -9 amendments which would remove the problematic Bottle Bill-related funding mechanism. OEC urges the committee to adopt either amendment and by doing so, preserve the integrity of Oregon's landmark Bottle Bill. Absent the adoption of either the -8 or -9 amendments, OEC urges the committee to reject HB 3940A.

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

Sincerely,

Jay Ward

Oregon Environmental Council

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