

March 29, 2021

House Committee On Energy and Environment  
Representative Pam Marsh, Chair  
Representative Ken Helm, Vice-Chair  
Representative David Brock Smith, Vice-Chair

RE: Testimony in support of House Bill 2488

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Committee:

I strongly support a **do-pass** vote for House Bill 2488-2. The dash-2 amendments requires the Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC) to adopt a new state-wide **climate justice** planning goal by the end of the next biennium. The goal must address:

- climate change measures related to reducing GHG emissions, mitigating the impacts of climate change and accumulating and storing GHG emissions;
- equity in participation; and
- environmental justice addressing disparate impacts within land use planning and decision making.

and it requires local governments to:

- Address climate change in comprehensive plans relating to public facilities and services, natural hazards, natural resource, economic development, housing and transportation.
- Ensure that the opportunity to participate in land use planning and decision-making is available to disadvantaged groups.
- Adopt and incorporate practices to address inclusion, environmental justice and equity in land use planning and decision-making.

As an experienced city planner — I worked for the City of Gresham from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s and retired as their Planning Director and I hold a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Portland State — I know first hand the direct link to and value of the statewide plan goals for local comprehensive planning. They provide a strong framework as every Oregon community works to address its issues and needs today and for the future.

In adding a climate justice plan goal HB 2488-2 strengthens this framework and will help Oregon communities address critical issues of climate change and equity and environmental justice that were not part of the current 19 goals when adopted in the 1970s.

Oregon's recently published 2021 State Agency Climate Change Adaptation Framework describes expected (and occurring) impacts of climate change. Effects and issues that local communities need to plan for include:

- Sea level raise — Sea levels will continue to rise, exacerbating the damage caused by storms and affecting, estuarine ecosystems, coastal infrastructure including roads and docks, and septic systems and water supplies due to saltwater intrusion as well as loss of land and property.
- Precipitation — changing patterns and extremes, longer duration and greater intensity.
  - Incidence of stormy weather is likely to increase along the coast, causing flooding from storm surge, coastal erosion, landslides, and severe wind events.
  - Precipitation arriving as rain instead of snow will result in earlier runoff, flashier river systems, flooding, less groundwater recharge, less snowpack, and glacial retreat, leading to summer water shortages, increased in-stream water temperatures, and lost recreational opportunities.
  - Stormwater retention and infrastructure requirements needs may change, potential risk to housing stock due to flooding and leaks, and impact on proper functioning of septic and sewage systems.
- Temperatures — more extremes and prolonged summer highs.
  - The number of days per year exceeding 86 degrees Fahrenheit likely will increase in many inland areas of the state, threatening the well-being of outdoor workers, health-compromised individuals, the young and old, and the functioning of Oregon's infrastructure.
  - Increased agricultural stress, roads and bridges adversely affected by thermal stress, increase heat may reduce non-motorized transport and cause change in tourism patterns. Regional population growth may occur due to heat impacts in other regions.
  - Summer wildfire risk will increase due to a longer dry season and stress brought about by drought, pests, and disease, causing an increased incidence of air pollution events, floods, and debris flows.
- Slope Stability — sea level and precipitation pattern changes will compromise once stable slopes. Limits suitability of lands for some use, loss/damage to facilities and infrastructure, infrastructure placed in unstable areas and loss or change of vegetation may effect slope stability near roads.
- Vegetation changes — shifts will occur in habitat suitability as a factor of changing temperature and precipitation.
  - A longer growing season may increase crop productivity in some areas and increase weed and pest loads.
  - Changes to Oregon's assemblages of plants and animals will affect people who depend on relatively stable ecosystems for their cultural identity, health, and livelihoods.
  - Change in buffer and green space conditions, loss of riparian buffer function or composition, loss of trees and shrubs in public parks and street tree canopy, altered canopy cover may reduce protection for non-motorized transport, energy demand increases with lessening percentage of canopy cover.
- Equity and environmental justice — all people, communities, and sectors of the economy will not feel or bear the effects of climate change equally. As describe in the OHA Climate

and Health in Oregon 2020 Report Climate change affects communities differently and requires us to acknowledge and address racial and economic inequities in Oregon.

- Communities of color and tribal communities are already disproportionately affected by social, economic and environmental impacts created by current and historical systems of oppression.
- Climate change adds additional layers of cumulative impacts, exacerbating existing disparities between white and non-white Oregonians.
- Lower-income people have fewer options for adapting to new challenges and are often forced to work and live on the frontlines with less financial stability and fewer alternatives.
- Equitable community participation in planning and land use decisions. Tribal communities, communities of color, low-income, and many rural communities have faced years of inequitable environmental policies and exclusionary decision-making practices created and maintained by government institutions. These communities are experts based on their lived experiences and this expertise must be centered in climate resilience work.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please vote this out of committee with a do-pass recommendation.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Harker, AICP  
House District 45