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Testimony in Support of SB 557 to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and House Committee on Energy and Environment March 1, 2017 Public Hearing

Across the board—as a state, nation, and world community—we are falling behind in the race against climate change disaster brought on by the effects of GHG emissions. Oregon needs to act in accordance with the best science to address climate change. Yes, we contribute a relatively small amount to the total emissions problem and the announced intent by the Trump Administration to take the nation in the totally opposite direction could cause us to throw up our hands in despair. However, nothing useful comes from buying into a powerless stance and giving up. Indeed, we need to consider the fact that, if every individual state that has the courage to take positive action does so, the collective positive effect could make a difference in the rate of advancement of climate disaster.

We owe it to our children and future generations to do no less than the best we can do.

A way to act on that proactive commitment during the 2017 Legislative Session is to pass a Clean Energy Jobs Bill. We write today in support of SB 557, known as the Cap, Trade and Invest Bill, one of several climate bills before the Committees.

The principles behind the Clean Energy Jobs Bills concept are sound and demonstrate a responsible approach to doing our part to secure a livable future:

- To limit or cap climate pollution in the state based on what the best available science indicates is necessary,
- To require all sectors that pollute to pay their fair share,
- To reinvest proceeds into communities that need the most help as we transition from a fossil fuel to a renewable energy economy and prepare for the climate change that is inevitable,
- To provide a just transition mechanism that leaves no workers dislocated by the shift to renewable energy,
- To establish a program administration that is effective and accountable.

The outcome is a conceptual framework that will be a win-win for Oregon. Not only will SB 557 cap and progressively reduce GHG emissions, but it will in the process, generate revenue that can be invested to create good jobs and job preparation for workers, incentivize and assist in the establishment of clean sustainable energy projects, and put Oregon on track for economic development urgently needed in our rural areas.

We wish to note that, while putting a tax on carbon is better than nothing—clearly the time is long overdue to place a penalty on polluting the atmosphere, acidifying our oceans, and otherwise jeopardizing life as we know it for corporate profit. However, a) Carbon is not the only harmful greenhouse gas, specifically LC 1242 will do nothing to discourage natural gas projects and the fugitive and life cycle methane emissions that go along with fracking and transmission. b) The fossil fuel industry could, and certainly would, find ways to adapt to a tax on pollution as a cost of doing business. It will oppose a tax, but if it fails to block passage of legislation, we still run the risk that a tax will have a less significant effect on addressing this critical issue.

Across the other bills before you, we add our voices to those who support SB 557 and we also urge that the Committee take the opportunity that time and expertise permits to make it even better by taking positive aspects of some of the other bills out there. Although there may be other areas in need of refinement, we are aware of the following:

- The absence of a means to keep program operations in synch with updated scientific information over time. To address this deficiency, we recommend that the Committee consider an amendment incorporating the requirement in HB 2468 “Cap and Delegate” that DEQ conduct five year reviews and adjust limits as needed to conform to the latest scientific information.
- The inclusion of outdated (2007) emissions reduction goals for target years of 2020, 2035, and 2050. To address this deficiency, we recommend that the Committee consider substituting for emissions reductions goals in SB 557 those provided in HB 2468, “Cap and Delegate.”
- Inaccurate definitions of global warming and climate change and erroneous usage of the terms as if they are synonymous. To address this deficiency, we support the language changes suggested in the submitted testimony of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN) (p. 9).

As was made clear by presenters at the Joint Committees’ February 20 informational meeting, the negative impacts of climate change are here now, but “business as usual” means that matters will get worse much faster. Focusing on transitioning to a clean energy economy is worth the effort if we care about those who seek to live on this planet after we are gone. SB 557 provides a blueprint to move forward, but importantly, it confronts head on the fact that some parts of our state will be more heavily affected by both the transition and the effects of climate change and builds solutions into the plan. The bill ensures that workers and rural communities are provided with transition and retraining support including training for new, clean energy jobs. It protects low-income and other disadvantaged communities from energy rate increases. It gives rural, low-income, and communities of color a voice in the administration, policy-making, and fund allocation.

Please support SB 557 with a “Do Pass” recommendation.

Respectfully submitted by:

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