

Testimony before the House Energy & Environment Committee
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HB 3068 & HB 3253

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

Oregon Environmental Council **supports** HB 3068 and HB 3253, which require DEQ to conduct a study and develop recommendations for legislation to encourage transition to cleaner burning woodstoves or other cleaner home heating options.

Most of us love the ambiance created by a fireplace or wood stove, but wood smoke unfortunately contains tiny particles and gases that can have serious health effects when breathed. Shockingly, the EPA estimates that a single fireplace operating for an hour and burning 10 pounds of wood will generate 4,300 times more carcinogenic PAHs (polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons) than 30 cigarettes. Smoke from fireplaces and woodstoves is one of the largest threats to air quality in Oregon.

The health effects of wood smoke are both:

- short-term (irritated eyes, throat, sinuses, and lungs; headaches; reduced lung function, especially in children; lung inflammation or swelling; increased risk of lower respiratory diseases; more severe or frequent symptoms from existing lung diseases such as asthma, emphysema, pneumonia, and bronchitis; and risk of heart attack and stroke for the elderly) and
- long-term (chronic lung disease including bronchitis and emphysema; chemical and structural changes in lungs; and cancer).

Those most at risk include older adults, children and teens, pregnant women, and people with heart or lung disease.

Besides the toll on our health, wood smoke pollution has a financial cost. An analysis by the Washington Department of Ecology in 2009 found that the health and economic impacts of fine particle pollution, including wood smoke, cost their state about \$190 million a year in medical care, prescription drugs, reduced productivity, lost work time, and missed school days.

The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Lane Regional Air Pollution Authority both have programs in place to reduce wood smoke pollution in areas that have trouble meeting Clean Air Act requirements for particulate matter. These programs are cognizant that wood burning is part of Oregon's culture and that some communities do not have options like natural gas for heating their homes, so there's a strong emphasis on voluntary measures.

But more can and must be done to reduce wood smoke pollution. None of us want to send a kid to the hospital with a severe asthma attack or an elderly person to their grave. That's why OEC supports HB 3068 and HB 3253. It's time to review the programs and policies in place and find ways to strengthen them in ways that effective and also equitable (burning wood can be the cheapest heating option). We agree, as it says in the bill, that DEQ "should consult with other state agencies and members of the public that have an interest in policy options to encourage the transition from the use of older, polluting woodstoves." In particular, representatives of lower-income neighborhoods should be consulted as they are often left out of policy-making.

In fact, OEC began bringing interested parties together more than a year ago to start this conversation. The group (consisting of DEQ, LRAPA, Oregon Health Authority, Washington, Multnomah and Clackamas counties, Neighbors for Clean Air, American Lung Association, Beyond Toxics and more) has met three times, and we've started a listserv to share best practices and other information.

Thank you for considering, and hopefully supporting, the direction laid out in HB 3068 and HB 3253.