Multnomah County

To: Chair Edwards and Vice Chair Olsen and members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Date: 31 March 2015
Re: SB 824

The problem of diesel exposure is particularly acute in Multnomah County. Multnomah County has the 4th highest exposure rate to diesel exhaust of all United States' counties.

Exposure to diesel engine exhaust causes cancer, increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular disease, exacerbates asthma and can lead to low-weight and preterm births.[1] Children are especially vulnerable because their lungs are still in the developmental phase and they breathe, on average, 50 percent more air per pound of body weight than adults. There is also a growing body of evidence linking traffic-related air pollution, including diesel exhaust, to neurodevelopmental disorders like Autism Spectrum Disorder.[2]

The levels of diesel pollution in Multnomah County result in significant public health impacts. A snapshot of annual impacts include[3]:

- 91 Premature deaths
- 70 non-fatal heart attacks
- 13,273 work loss days

All Multnomah County residents are exposed to a dangerous level of diesel pollution. In some areas, however, like near transportation corridors or rail yards, levels of diesel pollution are over 10 times health benchmarks.[4] In 2014 the Multnomah County Department of Health conducted a study of racial and ethnic health disparities and found that communities of color are exposed to levels of diesel pollution 2-3 times higher than their white counterparts.

Black/African Americans suffer the largest disparate exposure to diesel pollution. Black/African Americans are also twice as likely to be unemployed compared to non-Latino Whites, almost four times as likely to have children living in poverty, and more than twice as likely to have children not meeting third-grade reading standards.[5] The disproportionate impact of diesel

[1] U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2002). Health Assessment Document for Diesel Engine Exhaust. Washington, DC: National Center for Environmental Assessment, Office of Research and Development.
[2] Roberts, Andrea L., et al. "Perinatal air pollutant exposures and autism spectrum disorder in the children of nurses' health study II participants."*Environmental health perspectives* 121.8 (2013): 978-984.
[3] Clean Air Task Force, *Diesel and Health in America: The Lingering Threat*. 2005
[4] Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. *Portland Area Pollutant Summary Sheets/Maps for Air Toxics.* Portland 2012.
[5] Multnomah County Health Department. 2014 Report Card on Racial and Ethnic Disparities. Portland 2014.

pollution on communities of color further exasperate, and are the result of, institutional racism. The same communities subject to the injustices of segregation, discrimination, urban renewal, and now displacement due to gentrification, have also born the brunt of the environmental impact from pollutants like diesel PM. The state has pledged to use environmental justice considerations in future strategies to reduce emissions from diesel, and we urge the state to fulfill that promise through the adoption of this bill.[6]

Workers are also at risk. Certain occupations expose people to higher levels of diesel exhaust, increasing their risk of negative health effects. These jobs include railroad workers, truck drivers, loading dock workers, diesel mechanics and those who work in and around construction equipment. In total, this accounts for over 29,000 members of the Oregon workforce.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates diesel pollution causes 460 Oregonians to die prematurely every year. To make matters worse, there are an estimate 145 non-fatal heart attacks and 25,910 work loss days. The monetized value of health impacts in Oregon exceeds $3 billion annually.

Fortunately there are solutions available, such as those being proposed in SB 824. The majority of diesel emissions in Oregon come from heavy-duty trucks and construction equipment. Because of federal regulations, newer engines are fitted with pollution controls that reduce toxic emissions by 99%. But because federal rules only apply to *new* engines, it is left to states to address the thousands of older and dirtier engines still in use.

As California and Washington accelerate the phase-out of old diesel engines Oregon is becoming a dumping ground for dirty diesel. Unless the legislature acts now, Oregon will be stuck with the problem of older dirty diesel engines for decades to come. SB 824 effectively addresses the issue of older vehicles and establishes a comprehensive state wide policy to phase in the use of safer, cleaner, diesel engines. We urge the legislature to adopt SB 824.

[6] Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. *Portland Air Toxics Report: Environmental Justice and Sensitive Populations*. Portland 2012