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Testimony to the  
Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee  
February 2, 2016

Carrie Nyssen  
American Lung Association in Oregon

Support for SB 1574, Healthy Climate Act

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Climate change is the greatest global health threat of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>1</sup> Our response must be bold, and we must act now. If we don't, we can expect to lose many of the health gains made in the last fifty years—efforts to curb air pollution, reduce poverty, lower childhood mortality, reduce the spread of infectious disease, and more.

The American Lung Association's mission is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Climate change has become a central policy issue for us from our local efforts to our national policy priorities. Climate change is a great threat multiplier—warming temperatures exacerbate the conditions that make air quality worse. Poor air quality sickens people who are most vulnerable—children, elderly, and people with existing lung conditions.

Oregon has been among the top six states in our nation with the highest percentage of adults with asthma. We have over 70,000 kids with asthma and nearly 350,000 adults with asthma. If you've never been around someone with asthma and heard them struggle for a breath, it's heart wrenching. This trauma multiplied throughout our state takes a large toll – in our health and in our economy. Kids miss school, adults miss work. Annual asthma hospitalizations costs alone are over \$28 million, with an average cost of over \$14,000 per hospitalization.

We can, we must do more. We can address climate pollution just like we've addressed smog, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and many other air pollutants. We can limit this pollution and make those limits enforceable. In particular, we can cap climate pollution, as the Healthy Climate Act would do.

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<sup>1</sup> UCL–Lancet Commission of Managing the Health Effects of Climate Change: Key Messages (2015). Available at:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/global-health/project-pages/lancet1/ucl-lancet-climate-change-messages.pdf>

Capping pollution is effective. Our nation under George H. W. Bush capped acid rain pollution. According to the Environmental Protection Agency:

*The Acid Rain Program has produced remarkable and demonstrable results. It has reduced SO<sub>2</sub> emissions faster and at far lower costs than anticipated, yielding wide-ranging health and environmental improvements. In fact, a 2003 Office of Management and Budget (OMB) study found that the Acid Rain Program accounted for the largest quantified human health benefits – over \$70 billion annually – of any major federal regulatory program implemented in the last 10 years, with benefits exceeding costs by more than 40:1.<sup>2</sup>*

Oregon can be a leader in these efforts. Oregon can and must address climate pollution. There are proven, cost-effective policy tools ready for implementation.

Opponents to these measures will claim they are too costly. Evidence from already existing cap and trade programs shows they are not. There are real health emergencies and economic damages that are often overlooked in these policy discussions. The American Lung Association in Oregon believes to do nothing will be far more costly than acting now.

I urge your vote for SB 1574.

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental Protection Agency. Cap and Trade: Acid Rain Program Results. Available at: <http://www3.epa.gov/captrade/documents/ctresults.pdf>