



6899 NE Columbia Blvd, Suite A, Portland, OR 97218 503.980.5260 (p), 866.279.8719 (f)

Testimony to the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
2016 Oregon Senate Bill 1574
Healthy Climate Bill
February 1, 2016

Chair Edwards, Vice-Chair Olsen, and members of the Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources:

My name is Alan Hipólito, and I serve as Executive Director for Verde, an Oregon nonprofit corporation located in NE Portland's Cully Neighborhood. Since 2005, Verde has brought environmental assets to underserved neighborhoods, engaged residents, and ensured that assets linked economic development and community well-being to environmental stewardship and health. Per our mission statement, "Verde serves communities by building environmental wealth through social enterprise, outreach and advocacy."

- Through *Social Enterprise*, Verde establishes environmental businesses to employ and train low-income adults, create contracting opportunities for minority-owned and women-owned businesses, and bring environmental assets to low-income neighborhoods. Structured as Verde program areas, these enterprises sell environmental products and services in support of our tax-exempt mission.
- Through *Outreach-Advocacy*, Verde engages residents, peer organizations and policymakers about the connection between protecting the environment and making a good living, advocating and organizing with low-income people and people of color to drive environmental resources into their neighborhoods in response to existing needs: education, housing, economic opportunity, health.

Verde has a special focus on Cully, a place with clear environmental, economic and racial disparities: 26% of Cully Residents live in poverty; 51% of Cully Residents are people of color; 24% of Residents live within ¼ mile of a park; 5% of Residents live within ¼ mile of habitat; almost 9 in 10 students qualify for free/reduced lunch. Thus, many Cully residents are low-income and low wealth. This means they work (more than one) hard jobs; jobs that are low paying, unhealthy, unstable, and that offer little chance to advance or develop new skills. Also, they are economically isolated, disconnected from the broader economic opportunities, including opportunities driven by environmental policies like climate action.

Unfortunately, too many Oregonians, urban and rural, live in places like Cully, places that lack economic opportunity, suffer health disparities and disproportionate environmental impacts, and lack consistent resources for community engagement in planning a better neighborhood future. In these places, there are groups operating mission-driven programs to address disparities in health, income, education and natural resources.

This is why we support concepts like SB 1574, a legislative proposal to cap and price greenhouse gas emissions and reinvest in Oregon's communities and future. Verde and many Oregonian's know that true climate action can do more than reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it can create co-benefits in our most vulnerable communities by creating jobs, improving health, building affordable housing, as well as inspiring our children to learn and our entrepreneurs to innovate. We have a unique opportunity to mitigate the impacts of climate change, increase Oregon's economic and infrastructure resiliency, and yield direct economic and environmental benefits to communities most vulnerable to impacts of climate change.

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Experience clearly demonstrates that we must be intentional about creating these opportunities, or they will not happen. Therefore, any climate solution must lead with equity and adhere to the following principles:

- *Prevent Harm.* Protect disadvantaged communities locally and globally. Require minimum reductions in emissions of toxic air contaminants or criteria air pollutants. Prioritize mitigating negative financial impacts for households with lower incomes. Consider and mitigate impacts of environmental investments on displacement and gentrification.
- *Provide Benefit.* Reinvest revenues in ways that reduce disparities and create opportunities directly in disadvantaged communities. Ensure equitable distribution of improved air quality and related social, economic and environmental benefits. Benefits must outweigh burdens. Allocation of resources should meet multiple co-benefits and should be designed to respond directly to priorities and disparities in disadvantaged communities.
- *Inclusive Design and Implementation.* Inclusive, transparent and accountable policy development and implementation requires involvement of those most impacted in the design and implementation process. Require robust public engagement with disadvantaged communities. Ensure disadvantaged communities and individuals that have experience working for equity in low-income communities and communities of color represent a majority of seats on decision-making/advisory boards or commissions tasked with policy design, implementation, reporting, and deployment of revenue. State agencies responsible for implementation must accurately monitor and publicly report impacts on climate change indicators and benefits for disadvantaged communities.

Climate change poses the greatest threat to economic, environmental, racial and social equity in Oregon and around the world. The urgency of climate change, which will change every facet of our lives—community, health, employment, safety, and migration—requires immediate action. Verde supports an equitable carbon pricing program in Oregon that protects households and communities from impacts, reinvests a portion of the revenue to provide economic opportunities, supports more resilient communities, and makes the policy development and implementation process inclusive and accountable. Together, we can secure equitable climate solutions that cut climate pollution and transition states off fossil fuels, close opportunity gaps and invest in disadvantaged communities, and create a strong clean energy economy.

Please contact me if I can answer any questions or provide further information.

Much Obligated,

Alan Hipólito
Executive Director