



**Jessica Vega Pederson**  
Multnomah County Commissioner

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To: Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources  
From: Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County Commissioner  
Date: March 8, 2017  
Re: Support for SB 1008

Dear Chair Dembrow, Co-Chairs, and Members of the Committee,

Last year the people of Multnomah County were awakened to the serious hazards of poor air quality. Residents were shocked to learn that a recent U.S. Forest Service moss study revealed neighborhood hot spots with high levels of toxic metal emissions. The response to the discovery of these emissions both within the Metro region and across our state is Governor Brown's Cleaner Air Oregon initiative, which shows promise in helping to curb industrial air toxics and create health-based air quality standards. But more work is needed to address the serious threat to our air quality posed by diesel emissions.

All of Multnomah County is a diesel hot spot. According to Department of Environmental Quality reports, average levels of diesel pollution in Multnomah County are at least 5 to 10 times over Oregon's health benchmark.<sup>1</sup> When Washington state's more protective benchmark is applied, the Portland Metro area exceeds health safety levels by 53 to 8,555 times.

Oregon ranks among the five worst states for asthma, sending as many as one in seven people who are suffering from an asthma attack to the emergency department. We have worked hard as a county and as a state to reduce triggers of asthma attacks such as cigarette smoke, but we have ignored one of the deadliest and most persistent triggers of asthma attacks: diesel trucks and older construction equipment.

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<sup>1</sup> Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Portland Area Pollutant Summary Sheets/Maps for Air Toxics. Portland 2012. Available at:  
<http://www.deq.state.or.us/aq/toxics/docs/pats/15pollutantsabovesummary.pdf>

Diesel-powered vehicles make up a small portion of vehicles on the road here in Oregon, but pump out up to 60 percent of particulate emissions overall. Most of the emissions of diesel particulates come from older heavy-duty trucks and construction equipment. Newer engines designed with modern pollution controls can reduce emissions of harmful matter by 99%.

There is also an equity component to those impacted by diesel air emissions. Areas with high concentrations of low-income communities and communities of color are found within the I-5 and I-205 corridors. Living close to these high-traffic corridors leads to higher exposure to air particulate matter from passing diesel trucks. This exposure is compounded by the historical lack of access to transportation or health monitoring infrastructure for these communities.

SB 1008 offers a clear path to cleaner air by adopting emission standards that align Oregon with our neighbors to the north and south. It also assists in the financing of retrofitting or replacement of old, dirtier engines. With these new programs and protections in place, we can ensure that our communities across the state are breathing cleaner air.

In light of the current Federal administration's outlook regarding environmental protection, there has never been a more important time to act. Recent media reports suggest that the EPA's Environmental Justice program and Diesel Emissions Reduction Act face potential elimination in the coming proposed federal budget.<sup>2</sup> With the possibility that the Federal government may provide fewer resources to protect our air from harmful emissions, it is more essential than ever that state and local governments step up.

Clean air is important. We know that right now too many Oregonians are breathing air that our own standards say are high above safe levels. But we also know that we can fix this. SB 1008 offers us the chance to begin cleaning up our air, and ensuring all Oregonians live healthier, more equitable lives. I urge your support of SB 1008.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Vega Pederson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jessica Vega Pederson  
Multnomah County Commissioner  
District 3, Southeast and East Portland

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<sup>2</sup> CNN. "Source Reveals EPA Programs Trump's Budget Could Cut." March 2017. Available at: <http://www.cnn.com/2017/03/02/politics/epa-programs-donald-trump-budget/>