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March 15, 2017

Dear Chair Helm and Members of the House Energy and Environment Committee,

As a neighborhood based community organization surrounded by heavy industry, we write to you in support of HB 2669, The Toxics Reporting and Community Right to Know Act.

Verde serves communities by building environmental wealth through Social Enterprise, Outreach and Advocacy. Since 2005, Verde has brought new environmental investments to Portland's neighborhoods, involved community members in the planning and building of these investments, and ensured that low-income people and people of color directly benefited from the investments.

Verde leads Living Cully, a collaborative effort focused on the needs and priorities of low-income people and people of color in Northeast Portland's Cully neighborhood a predominantly low-income, people of color community. Our efforts there have led to real benefits for community members, including development of Cully Park where we have transformed a 25 acre landfill into a park opening later this year.

However, our great progress is threatened by poor air quality in Cully as identified by the US Forest Service's moss study data which should alarming levels of toxic pollutants, multiple stationary sources and two freight corridors which bisect the neighborhood (Columbia Blvd and Portland Highway). One of the fundamental challenges we have faced as a community is accessing information about air pollution in our community. Another fundamental challenge is the uncertainty of not knowing what the sources are and living with multiple sources of pollution and feeling "powerless to do something about it" in the words of one community member.

We support HB 2669 and urge you to pass this bill out of Committee with a strong recommendation for adoption. The bill has significant merit because it requires local governments to collect toxic emissions data based on materials balancing. Materials balancing is particularly important in the case of the Cully neighborhood because we have polluters who emit toxics to both land, air and water without sufficient oversight and without being required to report the extent of their pollution.

Governor Brown issued a statement that calls out the need to support pollution-burdened, environmental justice communities. The best way to follow the Governor's recommendation is to provide communities with exact and verifiable water, soil and air quality information. Our community deserves full public engagement grounded in factual information that we can access in a straightforward manner. Access to reliable information informs community-level participation in decision-making about the livability of our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony DeFalco".

Tony DeFalco  
Deputy Director