



Jessica Vega Pederson
Multnomah County Commissioner

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 600
Portland, Oregon 97214
Phone: (503) 988-5217
Email: district3@multco.us

To: Senate Committee on Rules
From: Jessica Vega Pederson, Multnomah County Commissioner
Date: May 17th, 2017
Re: Support for SB 1008

Dear Chair Burdick and members of the Senate Committee on Rules,

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.

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. We know that diesel pollution in Oregon is increasing our resident's risk of cancer; as well as damaging heart, lung, and brain functions. Besides the devastating human toll this pollution is causing, the increase in health care costs and loss in productivity that also result from our failure to act are costing the state's economy billions of dollars.

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, and have been found to contain dangerous toxic air pollutants, including cadmium, arsenic, benzene, formaldehyde and chromium compounds. 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.

I'm grateful to the Committee for improving this bill, the amendments move the bill in the right direction, but are not enough to achieve our state's health benchmark. Without a firm timeline for retiring or retrofitting the dirtiest engines still in use, we will continue to pay the heavy costs we know are attributable to diesel pollution.

One essential amendment to this bill is that which will prohibit the addition of pre-2007 diesel engines to Oregon's fleets. Today, Oregon's rate of retirement for these older, dirtier engines is lagging behind EPA estimates, and if we do not act swiftly, Oregon will become a dumping ground for dirtier engines that do not meet the more stringent standards of the states around us, and we will be consigned to this fate for a generation. We also support an amendment that allows local governments to create "no idle" zones around high-risk areas such as schools, hospitals, care centers, and day care centers.

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. Cleaner diesel engines can run with 95% less pollution and deliver substantial health benefits. 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. It is centered on a light-colored rectangular background.

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