

We are parishioners at St. Ignatius Catholic Church. Our parish is located in SE Portland but draws residents from throughout the Portland metro area.

We are in support of a strong Senate Bill 1008, the Clean Engines Clean Air Act. To effectively address the health, safety and economic impacts on our community, we need a firm timeline for the retirement or retrofitting of older, dirtier engines and an end to the addition of old, dirty engines to Oregon's fleet.

Long term exposure to air pollution increases health risks to adults, but especially children. Diesel pollution is a known carcinogen, and has also been conclusively linked to heart disease, asthma and other lung diseases. At least 6% of Oregonians are affected by lung disease; 10% of adults and 7% of children live with asthma, totaling over 360,000 Oregonians. Children are particularly vulnerable, due to their higher respiratory rates, increased activity, and sensitive developmental windows. Laborers, truck drivers and others who work with various kinds of diesel machines are also disproportionately affected by diesel pollution. The EPA estimates that about 460 Oregonians die prematurely each year due to diesel pollution, and many others experience non-lethal health impact which diminishes worker productivity and quality of life. Our faith teaches that human life is sacred and that each person is valuable, and we see that human life is under direct attack from diesel pollution.

Oregonians annually spends \$4.6 billion dollars on the negative health impacts of diesel pollution. Yet for each \$1 spent on reducing diesel pollution, there is up to a \$17-20 reduction in spending due to health benefits. Oregon currently has an extra \$68 million in funds as a result of a settlement with Volkswagen. These numbers demonstrate that it is prudent for our state to invest in the health and well-being of Oregonians by a rapid transition away from dirty diesel engines, aided by the Volkswagen settlement funds.

Fundamental to our faith is the call to love and care for our neighbor, especially those who are experiencing poverty or otherwise marginalized. About 90% of Oregonians live in counties where diesel exhaust increases risk of cancer over our lifetimes, and a 2011 study in Portland found that the ten lowest income and ten highest minority census block groups experience more exposure to all sources of air toxics than the average block group. Often located on the fringes of urban industrial areas, low-income communities and communities of color receive more exposure to air toxins and are two to three times more likely to be exposed to diesel particulate matter. Both asthma and heart disease are more prevalent in low-income households of Oregon. We are one human family and we must practice the virtue of solidarity. Diesel pollution is both a health issue and a justice issue, and needs to be addressed.

Oregonians deserve access to clean air. We urge you to enact legislation that affirms our shared vision of a healthy future for all people by drastically reducing diesel pollution in our state.

The Catholic tradition teaches that human dignity can be protected and a healthy community can be achieved only if human rights are protected and responsibilities are met. We believe people have a right and a duty to participate in society, seeking together the common good and well-being of all, especially the poor and vulnerable. Through parish discernment, we recognize a call to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. This call can, in part, be served by supporting SB-1008, legislation aimed at restoring the quality of air we breathe through the elimination of old diesel engines on our roadways.

## **Looking at SB 1008 through the themes of Catholic Social Teaching**

**Life and Dignity of the Human Person** - The Catholic Church proclaims that life is sacred and that the dignity of the human person is the foundation of a moral vision of society. This belief is integral to all the principles of our social teachings. We know human life is threatened by air, water and soil pollution. The EPA estimates that about 460 Oregonians die prematurely each year due to diesel pollution, and many others experience non-lethal health impact which diminishes quality of life.

**Call to Family, Community, and Participation** - How we organize our society- in economics and politics, in law and policy - directly affects human dignity and the capacity of individuals to grow in community. We know that our students at St Ignatius are subjected to diesel pollution from idling diesel trucks on Powell Blvd. Others of our community are disproportionately exposed to this carcinogen simply because of where they can afford to live. About 90% of Oregonians live in counties where diesel exhaust increases risk of cancer over our lifetimes, and a 2011 study in Portland found that the ten lowest income and ten highest minority census block groups experience more exposure to all sources of air toxics than the average block group. This is both a health issue and a justice issue that needs to be addressed through "faith filled" participation.

**Rights and Responsibilities** - Every person has a right to life and to those things required for human decency, such as clean air to breathe, healthy soil to grow our food, and clean water. Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities to one another, to our families and to the larger society. SB 1008 is a positive step in protecting all forms of life.

**Preferential Option for the Poor and Vulnerable** - Our tradition recalls the story of the Last Judgement (Mt 25:31-46) and instructs us to put the needs of the poor and vulnerable first. Children, the medically fragile, and low-income groups, particularly people of color, are at increased risk for exposure to diesel emissions and/or the ill-consequences to exposure. Their well-being should shape our public policy.

**Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers** - The economy must serve people, not the other way around. Work is a form of continuing participation in God's creation. Yet currently, laborers, truck drivers and others who work with various kinds of diesel machines have little recourse to the impact diesel pollution has on their health and well-being, even as they are disproportionately affected by diesel pollution in the work population.

**Solidarity** - We are one human family whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. We are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they may be. Pollution, in many of its forms, knows no borders and affects even our distant neighbors.

**Care for God's Creation** - We show our respect and love for the Creator by our protection and stewardship of creation. Care for the earth is a requirement of our faith. We are called to protect people and the planet, living our faith in relationship with all of God's creation. By supporting legislation that reduces the amount of diesel pollution being emitted into the air, we will protect our vulnerable environment and help to care for the health of all of our neighbors, especially extending to low-income people, minority people and children.