



February 1, 2017

Dear Chair Representative Ken Helm and members of the
House Committee on Energy and Environment:

My name is Merlyn Hough, and I am speaking today as Director of the Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA) in Lane County, Oregon. I am here today in support of HB 2725 which outlines strategies to reduce woodsmoke pollution in Oregon.

As the Director of a local air quality authority, I have seen and implemented a multitude of strategies to curb air pollution in our county. Lane County, like many other places in Oregon, sees high levels of winter time air pollution from wood burning. One of the most effective strategies to reduce pollution from woodsmoke is to change the devices that people are burning in. Older devices lack the technology to burn effectively and don't meet federal requirements for cleaner and more efficient burning.

As recently as May 2015, the federal New Source Performance Standards (NSPS) for new residential wood heaters were tightened, requiring the devices to not discharge more than 4.5 grams of particulate matter per hour. Having newer devices with improved technologies makes a big difference in the pollution output for families that rely on wood heat. Removal and replacement costs are often a barrier, especially for low income Oregonians, and having an established program that provides rebates to provide some financial relief will not only help the individual, but the greater public health and environment of their community.

LRAPA supports HB 2725.

The proposed changes in the statutes align with LRAPA's strategies to reduce wood smoke pollution in Lane County and would also significantly aid the efforts for pollution reduction in other parts of Oregon. The proposed statutes provide a path for funds to distribute for the specific tactic of reducing wood smoke. Removing and replacing old solid fuel burning devices is a proven method by which many areas in the Pacific Northwest have tackled woodsmoke issues. In its scope, HB 2725 wisely includes other important complementary programs such as public education, seasoned firewood, weatherization, and curtailment of woodburning during air stagnation episodes.

The proposed HB 2725 requires the Environment Quality Commission to adopt a rule that will establish a grant program that promotes local agencies to develop wood stove replacement and other woodsmoke reduction programs. These changes will promote the removal old devices that no longer operate efficiently and at minimum, replace them with more efficient solid fuel burning devices or even exchanged for alternative heating methods that do not have the same negative effects as solid fuel burning. LRAPA has done several rounds of woodstove removal and replacements in Lane County over the last ten years through different rounds of federal grant funding, and has seen the way these programs improved the air quality locally especially in low-income and rural areas.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Merlyn Hough
LRAPA Director