



City of Oakridge
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January 30, 2017

The Honorable Ken Helm, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environment

Legislative Testimony on House Bill 2725, Relating to Wood Smoke Pollution

Chair Helm and Members of the Committee:

The city of Oakridge was on the verge of being designated as a "serious" nonattainment area which would have made the city the only area in Oregon history to be designated "serious" nonattainment. A serious nonattainment designation would require more stringent requirements on woodstove use which would create economic challenges in a town where 56% of the households already qualify as low-income. For the first time in 25 years, the city of Oakridge recently met the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Air Quality Standards. The City is required to continue to maintain the air quality standards established by the EPA through an additional 10 year cycle.

Since November 2014, the city of Oakridge has worked with a number of community partners to develop strategies to help mitigate and minimize the effect of wood smoke in our area. The community partners include: The city of Oakridge, Lane Regional Air Protection Agency (LRAPA), Lane Electric Cooperative (LEC), St. Vincent de Paul, the Southern Willamette Forest Collaborative, United States Forest Service (USFS), the South Valley/Mid Coast Regional Solutions team, and various elected officials.

The City's goal is to mitigate the wood smoke health concerns within the City of Oakridge and its urban growth boundary. The Lane County Board of County Commissioners recently amended the county ordinance that regulates enforcement of wood heat smoke and gave authority to LRAPA to enforce the wood smoke ordinance within the City of Oakridge Urban Growth Boundary, which now mirrors the restrictions in Eugene and Springfield's Urban Growth Boundary.

The city and its community partners were able to come up with three strategies that we believe would help the city mitigate health and air quality concerns.

While we believe the grant funding structure proposed under HB 2725 would be beneficial in addressing some issues caused by wood smoke, simply replacing woodstoves is not a strategy that has worked in our community. In addition, as you know, House Bill 3068(2015) set up a workgroup to study and develop

recommendations to reduce woodstove smoke for legislative consideration. One of the recommendations that came out of the workgroup was **“Immediate funding to address urgent community needs (e.g. serious nonattainment areas) in Oakridge.”** The workgroup recommended one-time funding of \$1 million for the city of Oakridge to fund the strategy developed by the city and local community partners. The cost to carry out the strategy is about \$1.5 million; the city realizes that we may have to do this incrementally. The HB3068 workgroup, the city of Oakridge and our community partners believe the following three-prong strategy developed by the city and our community partners has the best chance for success:

1. Education:

- a. Hire a full time coordinator to implement all air attainment programs and act as a coordinator between partner agencies and organization.
- b. Create targeted messaging for youth and the broader population.
 - i. Create interactive presentations for school age children.
 - ii. Talk face to face with people and provide education materials at the local food pantry, senior meals, church luncheons, and community events.
 - iii. Train volunteer community members to act as ambassadors connecting neighbors and friends to information and resources.

2. Enforcement:

- a. Extend the code enforcement officer to a full time position.

3. Economic Assistance:

- a. Create a pilot program targeting the 58 wood burning exempt households for free DHP replacements and comprehensive home weatherization.
- b. Expand the DPH program to the entire community, both homeowners and renters, while allowing homeowners to keep certified woodstoves.
- c. Offer wood dependent homes compensation for electric bill on no-burnings days.
- d. Increase weatherization efforts in Oakridge and continue the Community Firewood Program.
- e. Reimburse homeowners for woodshed building materials.

The immediate funding of our strategy will help bring the area back into compliance and ensure Oakridge is on a path of continued compliance. Accordingly, we respectfully request you consider amending HB 2725 to provide for direct funding to the city of Oakridge in the amount of \$1 million as recommended by the House Bill 3068 workgroup.

On behalf of the Oakridge City Council thank you for your consideration. If you need additional information, please let me know.

Respectfully,



James B. Coey
Mayor