

TESTIMONY OF RAMON RAMIREZ, PRESIDENT OF PCUN IN SUPPORT of Clean Energy Jobs BILL SB 1507 and HB 4001

February 7, 2018

Dear Chair Dembrow and Chair Helm and members of the Committee

PCUN is Oregon's Farmworker Union and on behalf of PCUN's 6,500 members I testify in strong support of the CLEAN ENERGY JOBS BILL, Senate Bill 1507 and House Bill 4001.

Farmworker's and their families are the backbone of Oregon's 6 billion agriculture industries and help put food on the American table. It's no secret that climate pollution presents a major problem for our community. The economy and health of farm workers are tied to the land, and we're already seeing how climate change makes our jobs more difficult. From decreased crop yields impacting profits, to hotter, drier summers that create strenuous working conditions, those who work the land are put increasingly at risk.

Farmworker communities are particularly vulnerable to climate pollution; we're more directly exposed to the damaging, cancer-causing chemicals emitted by gas and diesel.

The life expectancy rate of a farmworker is 49 years of age compared to 78 for the general population. Low income communities and communities of color are also hit first and worst by climate change. Today, 80 percent of Latinos in the United States live in areas where the air quality doesn't meet federal standards. And in Woodburn, we are no different. Latinos make up 57 percent of the city's 25,000 residents. This needs to change.

To big oil and industry, polluting our air for free is business as usual. In 2018, the Oregon legislature has the opportunity to pass *Clean Energy Jobs*, a law that will cap and price pollution from Oregon's largest emitters. The proceeds created as a result will fund training opportunities for workers to join Oregon's already thriving clean energy sector. The cap will create the need for more workers, as companies large and small, and residents across all income levels, seek out clean energy and energy efficient upgrades.

Clean Energy Jobs will fund worker training to help transfer the skills many people already have into new and growing industries. Imagine this scenario: a fund that could help a local family install solar panels at home to cut down on their electric bill, and the company doing the installing also holds a training program for local men and women looking for a good paying career. Clean Energy Jobs could make this scenario reality in Woodburn and other farmworker communities. In Marion County, there is a great need for housing farmworkers. This fund can be used to fulfill that great need.

A law similar to Clean Energy Jobs has already passed in California. There we see that climate pollution has decreased, the economy has continued to grow, and investments have helped revitalize neighborhoods most gravely impacted by poverty and pollution.

In California, we're seeing things now like electric van pools in migrant farmworker towns where there wasn't even a bus line before; we're seeing 400 opportunities in just one city to work in the solar industry, putting solar panels on affordable apartment buildings near transit; we're looking at thousands of trees going into urban communities affected by traffic

congestion to help clean the air there and create good green space. And in some places, we're helping communities do really innovative things like transform a third-acre lot of unused public land into a green space with fruit trees that is creating healthy foods for the community, job training around community gardening, and things like that. Also, in California, farmers have also benefitted because they can also apply to get funding for buying updated farm machinery that produces less carbon.

Clean Energy Jobs can help Oregon surpass California successes if the following were implemented:

*The Clean Energy bill must include the participation of Oregon's communities of color and sovereign tribal nations, including representations on the Program Advisory Committee. The decision-making structure must transparent, equitable and accountable.

*Reinvestment for the most impacted communities, including farmworkers, Tribes and communities of color especially in rural Oregon.

*Worker rights standard matrix must be developed and in place for those companies applying for offsets.

*Environmental efficacy should be bolstered by limiting free allowances for energy-intensive trade exposed industries, eliminating exemptions for coal, fluorinated gases and reducing offsets to meet compliance and ensuring projects are based in Oregon.

*Utility sector proceeds must be used not only to mitigate the impact of Climate Change, but to meet the existing unmet need for energy assistance, weatherization, and community strategies to reduce carbon.

*Broaden the use of the Highway Trust Fund to maximize the reduction of Carbon.