



February 11, 2018

To: Chair Helm and Committee Members / Chair Dembrow and Committee Members House Committee on Energy and Environment / Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

Support HB 4002 / SB 1508

Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival, including environmental pollution.

Oregon PSR supports HB 4002 and SB 1508 which will provide needed funds for implementation of Cleaner Air Oregon (CAO) health-based rules to reduce risks of exposure to air pollutants in Oregon. CAO would target pollutant levels that are currently adversely affecting the health of Oregonians. At present there are few restrictions on industrial and commercial sources of toxic air pollutants. These facilities are allowed to release toxic chemicals into the air while making a profit, at the expense of the people of Oregon, and more severely, persons living in close proximity to industrial facilities.

We know that people of color, low-income people, children, the elderly, and persons with pre-existing health conditions are those that are most impacted by air pollution, including the industrial emissions that would be curtailed under CAO. Toxic air pollution is having an adverse impact on the whole state, its health, its supporting ecosystems, its quality of life, and its economy. It is unjust that entities are permitted to do business without internalizing the true and full costs of their businesses.

The reason for CAO, and the charge of Governor Brown, is that we know we have an air pollution problem, we know we are experiencing the adverse health effects of exposure to toxic air pollutants, we know that poor health adversely affects the economy of the state, and we know, as a State, we must address the problem effectively now. We cannot put it off. It is simply too costly. That is why we urge you to pass these critical funding bills now in the 2018 short session.

In order to begin to address this serious public health problem, we must fund the Department of Environmental Quality so that it can do the work that it has proposed and will propose in its rulemaking process. Without funds and legislative support to make a serious attempt at controlling exposures to toxic air pollutants, the people of Oregon will continue to suffer the increased deterioration of health and quality of life.

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Ill health costs money. Polluted air drives away people and commerce. But many of us cannot simply go away, nor should we have to. It's time for the business community to take responsibility for their participation in this assault on public health. People in the community are highly motivated. It is time for the legislature to reflect that motivation and find the funds to get this process moving. Our kids cannot afford to wait.

Thank you for consideration of our comments and please pass HB 4002 / SB 1508.

Theodora Tsongas, PhD, MS
Environmental Health Work Group Member



Kelly Campbell
Executive Director

