

January 17, 2020

RE: Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative (LC 19) — testimony in support of taking action to address climate change

Dear Chair Dembrow and Members of the Senate Interim Committee on Environmental and Natural Resources:

I am Jonathan Harker. I am resident of Portland (SD 23 & HD 45) and the father of two sons who are experiencing and will continue to experience the impacts of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions. I am also a retired City land use planner and a lifetime member of the American Institute of Certified Planners.

I supported HB 2020. And I am pleased (after watching the 1/13 meeting - kudos to Oregon for that opportunity) that LC-19 continues HB 2020's fundamental framework of capping GHG emissions along with a trade component that provide funding to invest in GHG emission mitigation; carbon sequestration and adaption to climate change impacts. It is important to me that legislation will result actions that meet Oregon's GHG reduction targets; supports transition to clean energy; invests in working lands and invests in rural, tribal and impacted communities.

Generally I support the allocations of funds as described in LC-19 for the Transportation Carbonization Investments Account. Linking most (although not all) of the investments of that Account to those areas covered in a geographic phase-of first the Portland Metropolitan area and a few years later the 44 cities that use at least 10 million gallons annually and the other MPO's makes sense as that will that covers about 90% of all Oregon's transportation related emissions. I do have some concerns that those areas left out of the program will be missing needed investments although I do understand the LC-19 would allow for counties and cities to opt-in.

Generally I support the allocations of funds described by the Climate Investment Fund including 10% going to tribes, 25% to working lands and natural areas and 25% for wildfire mitigation. Regarding wildfire mitigation I do think it is important that best practices are used that result in diverse naturally functioning forests and natural landscapes and not thinning projects that can cause more loss of carbon sequestration. I also have a concern about a general lack of specificity in calling for investment for impacted communities. I also have a concern that allocations for local government projects lack specificity — perhaps the language could be modified to require adoption of a climate action plan.

Regarding provisions for Natural Gas. Providing low income users with rate-relief is important. It was not clear from the presentation if LC 19 provides too little incentive to commercial and industrial users of natural gas to pay for their emissions as a way to incentivize reductions through provisions to require them invest in energy efficiency. Natural gas is a GHG emission and the program should ensure emissions from those users are mitigated.

An element that from HB 2020 which I feel is missing from LC-19 regards governance. Placing the program in DEQ rather than creating a new department does make sense for efficiencies and start up. What I would suggest those is creation of a advisory committee similar to what would have been created

in HB 2020: e.g. “a 13- member citizens’ advisory committee to advise the office ... The members of the committee must reflect the geographic, socioeconomic, racial and cultural diversity of this state ... as follows: ... urban environmental justice ... rural environmental justice ... eligible Indian tribes ... agriculture or forestry ... fisheries ... covered entities ... clean energy industry ... local government ... labor ... environmental or conservation ... scientist at public university ... home weatherization ... and public health equity.

I have seen commentary that considering a bill such as this Oregon Greenhouse Gas Initiative is not appropriate for a short session and that a short session was really intended for budget adjustments. However, I remember that the short session was not promoted just for budget adjustments but also to take up or continue past efforts that could not wait for the long session. Action on climate change, I feel, is exactly what the short session was intended to allow for. Passing HB 2020 was a near miss resulting in delay that our State can ill afford when it comes to climate change action.

I have also seen commentary that what happened last year should be construed as Oregonians not wanting this action. On the contrary I believe that a majority of Oregonians do want strong climate change action. HB 2020 was passed on the floor of the house with support of representatives representing 60% of the Oregon populace. I was disappointed that HB 2020 did not get to a Senate floor vote and would encourage all Senators to support our democracy by allowing a vote on the Senate floor should it get to that point.

Thank you for attention and your hard work as a Oregon legislator.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Harker AICP