

Dear Co-chairs Power and Dembrow and members of the Joint Committee on Carbon Reduction,

My name is John Stepanek, I'm 24 years old and I'm a graduate student at Oregon State University and a fellow with Our Climate, a nonprofit focused on mobilizing the generations most impacted by climate change to advocate for a science-based, equitable price on carbon pollution.

I am a biologist, and I've seen the effects of climate change all over this country, from the droughts and wildfires on the west coast to the floods and hurricanes on the east coast. My field work has taken me to some of the most beautiful places in this country, but I've seen with my own eyes how climate change is slowly erasing them. I've seen how climate change increases the spread of invasive species that cause environmental and economic damage, how oil extraction in the deserts of Colorado and New Mexico has scared away all the birds, and how the coast lines are being flooded, eroded, and destroyed, despite our attempts to stabilize them with vegetation. In 2015 I hiked the entire Pacific Crest Trail from Mexico to Canada, and I saw what the fires are already doing to our beautiful forests. I've seen more beauty and destruction on this planet than many people get to see in a lifetime, and it breaks my heart. I have a human right to a livable planet, and so do all of you. I speak on behalf of scientists and on behalf of young people who demand justice. Now.

That's why I'm thrilled to see Oregon's legislature putting forward a solution. But if we are going to finally tackle this issue, we need to do it right. I'm asking for a few changes to make sure this policy is as strong as possible to protect my generation and those to follow. Our network of students across the state ask that:

1. The cap should be lowered to ensure that greenhouse gas emissions from covered entities go to 0 by 2050.
2. The number of free allowances in the first year of the program should be reduced from 100% to 50%. Additionally, we encourage cement, polystyrene, and plastic industries not be eligible for free allowances.
3. There must be a specific percentage of investments in impacted communities, especially native peoples, low-income communities, and rural communities, as well as a more transparent process that will tie reduction of pollution directly to the use of funds in these communities.
4. Incineration of municipal solid waste should not receive an exemption.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has declared that we have 11 years to cut our carbon emissions in half to avoid global catastrophe. As a young scientist, I can assure you none of us are in this for the money or fame. We do it because we care about the planet despite being overworked, underpaid, and ignored when our results are bad PR for oil corporations. We believe this bill is a step in the right direction, but that it does not go far enough.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to working with you to strengthen this bill.

Concerned Oregonian