



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 792  
Senate Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

Speaker of the House Tina Kotek  
March 12, 2019

Chair Dembrow, members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 792.

One year ago today, a five-alarm fire at NW Metals endangered the Cully neighborhood in Northeast Portland and sent plumes of smoke over the city's metropolitan region. The fire destroyed four homes, killed at least 16 pets, and resulted in significant financial losses for nearby businesses and residents.

This destructive fire caused enormous trauma for many of my constituents. But it also highlighted that the Legislature can do more to ensure this kind of preventable disaster doesn't happen again. The NW Metals fire on March 12, 2018, raised awareness that the way we regulate auto dismantling businesses in Oregon is inadequate.

There are approximately 229 auto dismantlers throughout the state, and 18 percent of those businesses sit within Senate District 22, which covers North and Northeast Portland. We need to increase oversight and regulation of these businesses to increase safety for residents who live near these facilities.

The -4 amendment to Senate Bill 792 would give the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) the ability to work with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to increase oversight of auto dismantler facilities. This partnership would:

- Allow DEQ to coordinate with DMV inspectors and provide guidelines for observing potential environmental hazards during inspections;
- Allow the DMV to report environmental or safety hazards to DEQ;
- Require auto dismantlers to have a fire response plan on file with the DMV before they are granted a certificate; and
- Require additional inspections of DMV-certified sites by local fire districts (every six months instead of the current every two years) to ensure that auto dismantlers are following the fire code.

New coordination between DMV and DEQ would be a first step in what I believe should be a longer conversation about increased oversight of auto dismantler facilities. This bill, with the -4 amendment, will provide additional oversight in the near-term to begin to address the safety concerns of those who live near these facilities. I hope we have started a dialogue that will continue with further conversations about increased long-term safety. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue.