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April 8, 2019

Senator Michael Dembrow, Chair
Senate Environment and Natural Resources Committee
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Senate Bill 928 Oregon Climate Authority

Chair Dembrow and Members of the Committee,

We write in support of Senate Bill 928's vision to create a new state agency that focuses exclusively on addressing climate change and the transition to clean energy. State-level action to reduce greenhouse gases is urgently needed to address the ongoing risks to public safety, our environment, our climate, and local economy posed by climate change. With recommended amendments outlined below, SB 928 can help position the state to excel in transitioning to a leading clean energy economy and achieving our state's greenhouse gas reduction goals.

The Oregon Climate Authority (OCA) would be the first of its kind in the country. Designed well, it would elevate the importance of climate in state government, add research capacity that can aid legislative efforts, and provide better coordination among state agencies to address the climate crisis.

The OCA would build upon the important work of the Oregon Department of Energy and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality in the climate and energy space. At the same time, with the Oregon Department of Energy being rolled up into creation of the OCA, our state still needs to maintain core functions of the Department of Energy including energy planning, innovation, and facility siting; and to provide technical expertise, data, and thought leadership.

Energy and climate issues are interdependent.

There is a clear nexus between statewide issues, analysis and policies involving energy and climate. Combustion of fossil fuels to electrify and heat our homes and businesses and power our engines are the primary sources of greenhouse gases in Oregon. Decisions regarding energy are at the heart of our state's climate action. At the same time, ambitious climate policies that reduce our carbon footprint can catalyze Oregon's transition to a clean energy economy and increase our state's energy security. These core functions need to be maintained with a strengthened focus on climate.



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Statewide coordination on climate change is critical.

Our state agencies have taken a leading role implementing clean energy and climate programs so far. But we agree that climate policy would benefit from more attention, better coordination, and additional research and analysis at the state level. Creating a Climate Authority would better enable the state to address climate-related issues that cross agency jurisdictional boundaries. This coordinating approach could help the state develop pathways to achieve needed emissions reductions to meet state targets from programs and functions that currently live in different agencies.

Recommendations for amendments: We have not yet seen any proposed amendments for SB 928 which may address these concerns. Here are recommendations to improve the OCA:

- **Section 2 re: scope of mission:** Much of the language in SB 928 focuses on “energy systems,” but climate change is broader than just energy (as are climate programs and functions). While issues of energy and climate are deeply intertwined, there are opportunities to reduce emissions from waste, transportation, and super pollutants¹ in industry that may not be as evident with an emphasis on energy, and these sectors also need focused attention. Similarly, there are opportunities for sequestration throughout Oregon’s natural and working lands--including grasslands, forests, tidal marshes, agriculture soils, and others. It is important to note that not all sectors are the same, so different policy tools will be needed. Additionally, there are other core climate issues, such as public health and environmental justice, that should be integrated into climate analysis. We support maintaining the Oregon Department of Energy’s functions and duties, but believe expanded language would set up the OCA for better longer-term success.
- **Section 5 re: authority and accountability:** To create a thoughtful statewide climate strategy will require engaging forward-looking individuals with decarbonization expertise. Therefore, we have significant concerns about the composition of the Board outlined in the base bill. It is problematic that stakeholder groups, rather than specific types of expertise, are used to appoint Board Members. We strongly recommend that board members be appointed based on skill sets, which will provide expertise and potentially avoid some inherent conflicts of interest, such as:
 - transportation decarbonization
 - grid decarbonization
 - public health, climate resiliency/adaptation
 - industrial decarbonization/energy efficiency

¹ Super pollutants are greenhouse gases that may be smaller in volume, but have a much greater warming impact than carbon dioxide. These include methane; black carbon, and hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) found in refrigerants, industrial processes, and flame retardants, amongst other products. More information can be found here:

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/reports/2013/06/13/66262/super-pollutants-101/>



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- waste reduction
- sequestration
- knowledge of carbon markets
- environmental program expertise
- climate science expertise

We respect the work that state agency staff at both ODOE and DEQ have done implementing current legislative requirements. We want to ensure that all state agencies are well-resourced to carry out their public service. We strongly support the funding proposed for the Oregon Climate Authority, and other funding for agencies that have continuing roles to play achieving the state's climate targets.

With these recommended amendments, and keeping in mind the opportunity to review new amendments, we support the goals and vision of SB 928.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your bold leadership on climate.

Sincerely,

Jana Gastellum
Program Director, Climate
Oregon Environmental Council

Meredith Connolly
Oregon Director
Climate Solutions