

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chairs Helm and Smith, and Members of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment,

Oregon's land-use policies are outdated and in need of the reforms outlined in HB 2488- Equity and Climate in Land Use. It is time that we prioritize mitigating the impacts of climate change with the voices of those most greatly impacted by climate change leading the way.

The land-use goals currently outlined for Oregon do not address climate change. There is no time to waste by not explicitly planning ways to mitigate the impacts of climate change that currently seem inevitable. The wildfires and sporadic weather this winter are indicative of problems that Oregonians will face moving forward, and we need to plan for ways to address this; human rights to clean air and water, land-use, and nutritious food need to be prioritized and addressed in an equitable fashion moving forward. HB 2488 will hold us accountable to these types of priorities and help ensure that marginalized voices do not get sidelined in the process.

It is possible to build thriving communities with a low environmental impact by ensuring that housing is located within walking or biking distance from essential goods and services like grocery stores, healthcare, child-care services, schools, and jobs. In Oregon today, many more jobs are in the heart of Portland than on the periphery of the Portland-Metro area, including Gresham, my hometown. Combined with the prohibitive cost of living in much of Portland, this creates a requirement that low-income people must commute long distances to work, congesting and polluting the roadways. Addressing this problem would be one way that land-use management can prioritize the environment and lower-income communities simultaneously.

Passing equitable land-use policies is also a way that Oregon can begin to address some of the racial-inequalities that are woven into the state's social and economic systems. People of color are often forced to live in areas with the most pollution and environmental hazards because of the lasting effects of racially discriminatory housing policies and racist social structures. These social structures did not disappear when racist policies were replaced by more inclusive ones, rather, we need to work with communities of color to create practical solutions to address racism. We need affordable housing of many types to be in communities all throughout Oregon, rather than primarily in undesirable areas that pose serious health and safety risks for those who live there!

I strongly support the passage of HB 2488 to update Oregon's Land Use Planning System to address climate change, environmental justice and equity in the planning system in a holistic and integrated manner, which is the only way to prevent climate responses from reinforcing existing inequities. HB 2488 will guarantee climate and equity-responsive land use planning by Oregon's local governments and ensure that Oregon is prepared for the unique challenges of this century.

Thank you for considering my comments and creating an equitable and climate-smart future for Oregon.

Sincerely,

Juliana Brown, Gresham Oregon