



March 8, 2021

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

If our state is to adequately address the challenges presented by the intersection of the climate crisis and systemic racism, then we need a planning system that is up to the task. For that reason, I urge you to support HB 2488—Equity and Climate in Land Use, to ensure that Oregon’s land use planning system includes a comprehensive approach to addressing climate change mitigation and adaptation, equity, hazard risk reduction, and environmental justice.

As a planning Commissioner in the City of Salem, it is my role to help address the orderly growth of the bustling region by adhering to statewide land use planning goals. However, no current planning goals explicitly address climate change or environmental justice: two factors critical in planning for a successful future in the Mid-Willamette Valley. A new statewide land use planning goal—Goal 20—would help ensure that climate, equity and environmental justice are addressed in our statewide land use planning decisions.

Increasingly, organizations such as the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group, and the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy recognize the critical and necessary relationship between local land use planning, climate change, and racial equity. Indeed, these organizations call for an increased attention to local government land use with respect to this relationship. Moreover, the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's own Environmental Justice Progress Report FY2020](#) states from the outset, “Low-income, minority, tribal, and indigenous communities are more likely to be impacted by environmental hazards and more likely to live near contaminated lands.” As we move further into the 21st century it is imperative that Oregon position itself to prevent further inequity.

Local governments, like the one in which I serve, are responsible for decisions regarding comprehensive plans, urban growth boundaries, and urban and rural reserves without sufficient consideration of either the projected climate impacts of land use decisions within their jurisdiction or whether these decisions will help achieve Oregon’s greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. According to the [U.S. Global Change Research Program's 2018 Second State of the Carbon Cycle Report](#), “Emissions from the urban built environment are directly shaped by societal factors, including regulations and policies governing land use, technologies such as transportation, and indirect factors such as demands for goods and services produced outside city boundaries.”

Further, as part of InvestigateWest's report "[Getting to Zero: Decarbonizing Cascadia](#)," the non-profit unveiled climate mapping for the Pacific Northwest that spotlights the selection of communities in Oregon that will bear greater attention as climate change worsens. These communities will face above-average risk of experiencing wildfire, flooding or extreme heat, and a prevalence of characteristics, such as poverty, that make the community more vulnerable to those climate impacts. In order for local governments, and the state, to adequately plan to mitigate and adapt to this reality, we need a unifying statewide goal to guide our vision so that each of our communities across the state are working in tandem toward the same end.

We know that the climate crisis did not emerge out of a vacuum: it is both a product of and exacerbates existing racial, social and socioeconomic inequities. Oregon's Native American governments and tribal communities, Black, Latinx and other people of color, as well as low income and under-resourced rural communities, have told us time and again that our current planning system simply does not serve them. Consultation and inclusion in land use decision-making processes is often inadequate and insufficient in scope.

I therefore 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.

I also urge the members of the House Committee on Energy and the Environment to indicate their support for the recommended budget of \$800,000 to both initiate and finish the adoption of a new Goal 20 for Equity and Climate in this biennium. There is positive forward movement in securing funding in that the Department of Land Conservation and Development included \$800,000 in Package 90 for Equity Initiatives as part of their proposed agency budget (see SB 5530). In addition, in order to provide adequate technical assistance to underserved rural communities and smaller cities and counties, a recommendation from the House Energy and Environment Committee for additional funding allocations would be appreciated. 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.

The history of exclusionary zoning laws, from property setbacks to single-family zoning, redlining, and even the Constitution of Oregon, set about to intentionally manifest land use inequity. It is time we work just as intentionally to dismantle this legacy of inequity. It may be the history of who we were, but it is not who we have to be.

Thank you for considering my comments and working to foster an equitable and successful future for Oregon.

Sincerely,

Casey Kopcho
Planning Commissioner
City of Salem