

**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment
on Senate Bill 286**

Feb 9, 2021

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Oregon Environmental Council supports SB 286 to house the Environmental Justice Council at the Department of Environmental Quality, similar to how the Oregon Invasive Species Council is housed at the Oregon Department of Agriculture. SB 286 also directs the Council to develop an assessment to aid state agencies in identifying vulnerable populations.

As an organization that works across Oregon to bring equitable environmental policies to the state, OEC supports the current Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) in being a voice for Oregon's most vulnerable, low income and minority communities who are impacted disproportionately by environmental degradation.

Environmental impacts on low-income, rural neighborhoods, people of color and other vulnerable communities must be assessed and considered by state agencies in their decision-making, and the EJTF has facilitated measures to hold agencies accountable in their environmental practices, procedures and policies.

However, more requests are being made of this all-volunteer citizen advisory group, and this bill seeks to better support these efforts. Establishing a Council and housing it at a state agency will provide more resources for this work. Oregonian's health is affected by many outside factors including multiple sources of environmental pollution and other social conditions and stressors. Some people and communities are burdened by higher levels of pollution and more social stressors than others. The analysis will assist agencies in identifying environmental vulnerabilities and more effectively engaging communities to address and prioritize solutions. This should lead to more effective solutions.

Many states have are investing in environmental justice tools and processes and have been following Oregon's leadership. Now is the time where we must invest in protecting the environment for the most vulnerable populations in the state.

Oregon Environmental Council, on behalf of our members throughout Oregon, supports SB 286.