

We are the Oregon Just Transition Alliance and Racial Justice Council Environmental Equity Committee and we urge your support of HB 4077A. HB 4077A is a key component to best support the work of the Environmental Justice Council by building an environmental justice mapping tool to benefit communities all across Oregon.

In the last two years, Oregonians have faced an ongoing pandemic, devastating wildfires, and an unprecedented heat wave that took the lives of more than 100 people. This is in addition to issues Oregon was already facing: hazardous air pollution, lead exposure, unsafe working conditions and other detrimental environmental risks. While many of us have been impacted, people with disabilities, many tribal communities, rural communities, low-income communities, Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other people of color feel it first and worst.

Equitable environmental strategies offer more support, resources, and capacity to communities that carry a bigger burden of environmental problems. In order to achieve a more just future for the environment, we have to address the gaps of engagement between marginalized communities in Oregon's environmental decision-making processes. People of color, Indigenous nations, low-income, rural, and coastal communities in Oregon do not have equitable access to these processes.

Members of environmental justice communities often provide their time, expertise, and engagement to improve the lives of all Oregonians without being given adequate resources to do so. Underserved communities are asked to do more and lend our voices, but not given direct power and opportunity to create meaningful change. We are asked to give insight to our lived experiences but are not given resources to make meaningful change.

The Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) is a group of volunteer advocates from around Oregon that seek to bridge that gap in engagement. Representing some of Oregon's ethnic, geographic, and economic diversity, these volunteers have been dedicated to helping Oregon achieve environmental equity for more than a decade. It is time to support the EJTF and provide them with the resources they need to help them achieve their goals on behalf of all Oregonians.

Data collection, analysis, and research are essential tools to determine environmental impacts on low-income, rural neighborhoods, people of color and other vulnerable communities. HB 4077 is a solution to advance and uplift environmental justice within the state. The development of an environmental justice mapping tool is necessary to determine and evaluate environmental impacts on all of Oregon's communities.

If Oregon state agencies collect data and information, then the community can better influence their decisions in environmental program development, implementation, and funding. The use of health-related data, socioeconomic information and environmental disparities could be layered together to give a holistic picture of environmental justice in the state.

We are requesting that you support the passage and implementation of HB 4077, which would elevate and enhance environmental justice in the state of Oregon. The bill would solidify the legacy of the Environmental Justice Task Force and centralize the collection of environmental justice data.

Now is the time where we must invest in protecting the environment for the most vulnerable populations in the state. HB 4077 represents a just, practical, and efficient step forward for environmental policymaking that addresses the needs of Oregon's most underrepresented communities.

Sincerely,

