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Wednesday, February 2, 2022

Madam Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB4077, the Environmental Justice for All bill. Rogue Climate was founded in 2013 in the Rogue Valley of Southern Oregon. We serve and work alongside Southern Oregon and South Coast communities most impacted by climate change, including low-income, rural, youth, and communities of color, by organizing for clean energy, sustainable jobs, a healthy environment, and more recently supporting our communities through the impacts of climate change.

In September of 2020, about 3,000 structures in our community, including our office and many of our neighbors' homes, burned down in the Almeda fire. For a year after the fire we coordinated two sites that served 500 - 1,200 households per week in Talent and Phoenix with the Rogue Action Center and the Southern Oregon Health Equity Coalition. To this day, Rogue Climate and our partners continue to directly support community members who were displaced by the fire through supplies distribution and helping people navigate processes to get the state and federal resources they are eligible for.

The Almeda Fire confirmed the fact that communities of color and low-income households are hardest hit by climate disasters. In a survey of fire survivors, 65% of the respondents self-identified as Latino/a/x, 1 in 5 respondents work in agriculture, and 20% work in the food-service industry.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Jackson County estimates that out of the 2,357 residential structures lost 1,746 units lost were manufactured homes.<sup>2</sup>

Environmental justice must be key in Oregon's response to natural disasters, like the Almeda Fire, and other environmental issues. However, the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) lacks adequate resources and the infrastructure necessary to continue their work within environmental justice communities. The EJTF has never had a real budget or designated staff person. Oregon state agencies collect data and information that enhance and influence their

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<sup>1</sup>*In Our Own Voices 2021*, Pg 13 <https://www.sohealththe.org/post/fire-survivors-survey-report>

<sup>2</sup>

<https://www.oregonlive.com/pacific-northwest-news/2020/09/almeda-fire-ravages-mobile-home-parks-in-rogue-valley-exacerbating-affordable-housing-shortage.html>



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decisions in environmental program development, implementation, and funding. **We believe with the dedicated resources from HB4077, the EJTF – revitalized as the Environmental Justice Council – would be better supported to reach environmental justice communities across Oregon, including our rural communities in Southern Oregon and the South Coast.**

Additionally, Oregon’s natural resources agencies lack centralized data and mapping capacity to determine how to develop government policies and programs to serve vulnerable and highly impacted communities. While serving on the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality’s Greenhouse Gas Rulemaking Advisory Council, Rogue Climate and other environmental justice-focused advocates repeatedly requested mapping, like Washington’s Health Disparities Map<sup>3</sup>, to determine which specific communities in Oregon are most impacted by pollution and if the proposed rules would result in real reductions of pollution in those communities, per DEQ’s equity goals. **HB4077’s funding for Oregon-specific data and information would help give a holistic picture of intersecting environmental, social, and health impacts experienced by communities across Oregon and ensure policies in Oregon truly reach their equity goals.**

Please support HB4077.

Thank you,

Hannah Sohl  
Executive Director  
Rogue Climate