



TO: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources

FROM: Beyond Toxics

DATE: February 7, 2021

RE: HB 4077

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Hudson, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to request your support for HB 4077 relating to expanding the capacity and essential work of the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF). Beyond Toxics is a statewide environmental justice organization that advances policies that ensure meaningful participation and cultivate grassroots leadership from Oregon's frontline, rural, and impacted communities. Thank you for considering our comments.

Beyond Toxics has regularly attended EJTF meetings for the past seven years to witness the growing influence the Task Force has made to raise the profile of environmental justice issues, identify the gaps in state policy and lift up the voices of underrepresented communities of color in Oregon. However, throughout these years, the Task Force has been underfunded and understaffed, making it difficult for this advisory body to follow through on its essential functions. Such underinvestment reverberates outwards to our communities, harming people who already experience vulnerability and reducing their capacity to participate in the decisions that will shape the future of our environment and economy.

We urge you to elevate the Task Force to the Environmental Justice Council and support intentional investments in the work to refine and clarify how we measure vulnerability and underinvestment using a scientific methodology, cumulative impact analysis. Equity mapping is needed to grasp the disproportionate environmental impacts on vulnerable populations. Armed with good data, our state agencies will be better able to alleviate environmental and public health burdens that have historically overwhelmed low-income and communities of color burdened by pollution and climate hazards.

We urge you to support HB 4077 to ensure that Oregon supports an Environmental Justice Council that ensures diversity, equity, and inclusion in environmental policies and the use of scientific methods to identify and eliminate existing public health disparities. We must not wait any longer to invest in environmental justice, especially in the midst of countless climate disasters, increasing air and water pollution, and an ongoing pandemic.

Sincerely,

Lisa Arkin, Executive Director

Meet Panchal, Environmental Justice Statewide Projects Manager

Beyond Toxics

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