

Susheela Jayapal



Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2

February 7, 2022

Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
900 Court Street NE, S-417
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for SB 1567

Dear Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Findley, and members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

I am the Multnomah County Commissioner for District 2, representing North, Northeast, and parts of East Portland. Thank you for reading my testimony in support of SB 1567.


The Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub operates on unstable soils along the Willamette River in the Linnton Neighborhood and directly across the river from the St. Johns community in North Portland, an area I represent. Linnton has a painful history shaped by the racism towards communities living there and the displacement of our Black community. This history began when the land was stolen from Indigenous people, followed in the early 1900s when the vast majority of employment was in the mills. Most workers living in company housing along the railroad tracks were immigrants; Japanese, Filipino, Italians, East Indians, and Czechoslovakian. In 1929, when hazardous fires burnt down industrial sites in Southeast Portland, the Portland Commissioners voted to move the fuel tanks outside of city limits to Linnton. As the tanks moved in, the immigrant, Black, and Indigenous communities were forced out from their built community when industry left the area, and eminent domain chipped away at their town.

Many of those communities later made their home in North Portland, and St. Johns and other neighborhoods directly across the river from the tank farms continue to be among the most diverse neighborhoods in the city. It was the concerns from residents of these neighborhoods - which will be among those most vulnerable to the impacts of fuel releases from the CEI Hub - that led me to partner with Commissioner Sharon Meieran to fund research to assess and attempt to quantify the extent and costs of these impacts. We all knew that these impacts would be nothing short of catastrophic, but the recently published report by EcoNorthwest provides important confirmation and additional detail.

Addressing, mitigating, and ensuring financial accountability for these risks will require a multi-layered and multi-jurisdictional approach. SB 1567, which will require the owners and operators of the fuel tanks to conduct a seismic vulnerability assessment and grant the DEQ authority to require the implementation of a seismic risk plan to reduce the risks of a major catastrophe, is an essential component of such an approach. There is no way to compensate communities for losing loved ones, family homes, or access to natural resources. Previous environmental disasters have shown us that we must create an emergency response plan to reduce vulnerabilities during an event - and adopt a recovery plan to implement after the event. With mitigation plans in place, the impacts of a disaster would likely be significantly reduced.

By holding the fossil fuel industry accountable for its role in creating these enormous risks, SB 1567 is an essential step in protecting vulnerable Oregonians' safety and environmental well-being.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Spencer Degen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the name.