



February 9, 2022

Submitter: Jairaj Singh, Climate Resilience and Environmental Justice Director
On Behalf Of: Unite Oregon
Committee: House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
Measure: HB 4077

Re: HB 4077 Environmental Justice for All - SUPPORT

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

My name is Jairaj Singh, and I'm proud to be here representing Unite Oregon as the Climate Resilience and Environmental Justice Director, to express our strong support for HB 4077 and amendments.

Unite Oregon is a statewide racial and social justice community based organization working to eliminate systemic inequities and fight for a more just and equitable society for immigrants, refugees, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, rural communities, and low-income Oregonians. We are the only intercultural movement building nonprofit in Oregon with four chapters in both northern and southern Oregon serving 70,000 members and supporters, working successfully to organize communities across the urban-rural divide.

There is an urgency expressed in the stories I hear from community members I am accountable to, of the interconnected struggles and compounding violence of poverty, housing insecurity and illnesses layered with pollution and more severe climate disasters. These stories of lived experiences are not new, and now it is time for geospatial data in Oregon to represent the realities of frontline and fenceline communities. These realities are intersecting and not discrete data sets. That is why House Bill 4077 is important to support and pass.

When it comes to addressing environmental and climate justice, geospatial tools, like the environmental justice mapping tool created through HB 4077, are a powerful ally to make collaborative, data driven decisions. They have the ability to identify disadvantaged and vulnerable communities that should be prioritized to account for historic and present harms and lack of disinvestment. These tools can allow a wide variety of users to visualize and explore patterns of the pollution and climate burdens certain communities face, as well as examine environmental and climate vulnerabilities, revealing what kinds of communities are and aren't at risk from these hazards.

Oregon needs to gather comprehensive data and to create an approach for combining high resolution environmental, public health, demographic, and socio-economic information. The -1 adds a requirement to collect and consider community data sets and calls out socio-economic data in addition to environmental, public health, and demographic information. The effective development and use of geospatial tools will help policymakers alleviate historic and ongoing environmental and climate injustices, and invest in healthy, resilient communities for all.

Along with the data and mapping justice component, Unite Oregon urges the passage of HB 4077 to expand the capacity of the Environmental Justice Task Force, into the Environmental Justice Council. Oregon needs to invest in bolstering our statewide environmental justice infrastructure by modifying membership and duties of the Environmental Justice Council. The Environmental Justice Council increases the capacity for broader representation, including the addition of a youth member to represent future generations. This transformation is critical in order to revamp our efforts in addressing the worsening environmental and climate disasters that are taking place more frequently.



HB 4077 is a crucial bill that is long overdue and it will make the lives of many Black, Indigenous, and communities of color better across Oregon. We are grateful for the collaboration with other stakeholders that has resulted in the -1 amendment, but we hope the bill will continue to remain strong and that all stakeholders and legislators who see the value in this work help the bill to pass successfully. On behalf of Unite Oregon and as a member of the Oregon Just Transition Alliance, we urge you to support HB 4077 to help Oregon continue to be a regional and national leader to advance environmental justice.

Thank you,
Jairaj Singh
Climate Resilience and Environmental Justice Director at Unite Oregon