
Multnomah County Commissioner, District 2

February 15, 2023

TO: House Committee on Climate Energy and Environment
RE: HB 3158

Good afternoon Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, and members of the committee.

My name is Susheela Jayapal and I represent North, Northeast, and parts of East Portland on the Multnomah County Board of Commissioners.

I also served as Chair of the Joint Task Force on Supporting Businesses in Reducing Diesel Emissions, which I'll talk more about shortly.

I am here today to support HB 3158, and give you a little context on where the revenue concepts in this bill come from.

In 2019 the legislature adopted HB 2007, which phases out old diesel engines in medium and heavy duty trucks in Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington counties.

This bill imposed requirements on truck owners, but did not have a pathway, beyond the use of Volkswagen Settlement funds, to assist regulated entities, like businesses, with the expense of transitioning to cleaner equipment.

That's where the Diesel Task Force came in.

Created by HB 2007, the Task Force included representatives from business as well as environmental and public health advocates, and was charged with considering public funding strategies for supporting businesses in reducing emissions.

The full task force report, which was unanimously approved, was submitted to the legislature in 2020, but I would like to resubmit it to you today as an exhibit for considering this bill.

I wanted to bring up a few points related to the report and the committee's work that I think are important to today's hearing.

First of all, diesel engines power our economy. Whether it's the package that gets delivered to our home, or the trade dependent export economy, we rely on diesel engines to get business done in this state.

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But, we also know that the emissions from diesel engines, especially older diesel engines without filters, are very harmful to human health, and in areas of the state, like Multnomah County, where there is a large concentration of commercial activity, diesel emissions are many times higher than what the Department of Environmental Quality deems as “safe.”

That’s why regulations like those in HB 2007 are so important.

But regulations are only one half of the equation, and without revenue to support businesses in transitioning to cleaner equipment the equation will remain unbalanced.

VW funding is a good start, but it will be ultimately insufficient.

Indeed the first two rounds of VW funding netted \$95 million in grant applications for only \$16 million in awarded funds so far.

Clearly, many more companies need help than current funding allows.

The revenue sources identified in HB 3158 offer us an important starting point for negotiations.

Our goal should be to speed up the transition to cleaner fleets; and we will need ongoing revenue that is supported by a broad base of taxpayers in order to do that.

During the course of the Task Force’s work we looked at states like Texas, Washington and California, and in all those states, in addition to regulation, we saw substantial investments in cleaner equipment.

The Task Force discussed and analyzed a variety of revenue options, the most promising of which were included in the report, and that you see contained in this bill.

With this bill now introduced, we need to come together and decide on the exact suite of revenue measures and the right amounts, to get this work done.

The Task Force members met in good faith to discuss the revenue options, and demonstrated that there is room in the legislative process for negotiation and compromise.

Because at the end of the day, we can all recognize that the formula is not balanced. We have regulations, but we don’t have a sustained source of funding to assist with this transition.

I hope that my Task Force colleagues can come to the table with the members of this committee and develop a strategy that can move all of us forward.