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February 3, 2023

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE Salem Oregon 97301

Re: SB 852 - Support

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Findley, and members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment,

Verde is a community-based organization that works to build environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. Environmental wealth means many things, from clean air and water to access to resources to develop projects that provide community benefits like resilience. Environmental wealth is a core value of environmental justice, which is in its most simple definition about balancing benefits and burdens so that no one community is over- or under-advantaged.

The Oregon statutory definition of environmental justice communities is broad, in part because so many communities in Oregon are incredibly impacted by a changing climate and the resulting fires, ice storms, and heat waves. And as the map, Christy showed demonstrates, much of the state is Justice40 communities. Verde represents Black, Indigenous, Latino/a/e, Asian, Pacific Islander, and other people of color, or BIPOC, communities mostly in Portland, but I live in Senator Findley's district in Lake County and I see many parallels how the community I live in and the communities Verde serves are disenfranchised, marginalized, and sometimes forgotten in the current system.

Verde is proud to support SB 852, because it is an opportunity to show environmental justice communities, regardless of where they are in the state that they are seen, that they matter, and that they deserve environmental wealth of all kinds. SB 852 is the kind of program that should exist in every natural resources agency and we are grateful to the

Department of Energy for exploring this idea. SB 852 will help environmental justice communities identify their energy needs, planning for their energy futures, and developing the energy projects that help meet community needs and goals.

In Verde's experience working in environmental justice, communities know best what challenges they face and what strategies they hope to deploy to address them. They don't need someone to tell them what to do. But given the many different stressors and responsibilities and limited capacity and resources to bear, communities often don't have the needed support to do part time what in many more privileged spaces is full time work.

Verde helped advocate for the creation of the Community Renewable Energy or C-REP program at ODOE. The goal was to move millions of dollars to the kinds of the community-benefiting energy projects that the communities we serve envision and need. A year into the program, one of the chief concerns we've heard is that this money is great but communities don't have the capacity to write grants to access the money. SB 852 will help communities like Lake County, and Cully, where Verde is located in Portland, to remove burdens of navigating and apply for grants. This is especially important as a massive amount of federal funding begins to move. The potential opportunities are overwhelming. A central resource that can help communities to figure out what they qualify for, what they can do with it, and how to get it is a great idea. That SB 852 makes it a person and not just a website or a hotline is even better.

SB 852 is the kind of policy we need more of, one that utilizes the structures of the state to move resources to communities who need them and know how to use them. I strongly urge you to support this important policy and I'm happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Oriana Magnera

Energy Climate and Transportation Manager

Verde