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House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

Testimony in support of HB 3016

Submitted by Sergio Lopez, Climate and Urban Partnerships Lead

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Sergio Lopez and I am the Climate and Urban Partnerships Lead for The Nature Conservancy in Oregon. The Nature Conservancy is a science-based, non-partisan organization that works in communities across the state, manages lands and waters in varied ecosystems, and partners with ranchers, farmers, fishers, timber, and environmental interests on some of the most challenging conservation issues facing people and nature. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 3016.

Addressing issues of equity and inclusion in community green infrastructure projects offer a highly effective way to make long-term improvements in climate disparities and community health. The establishment of a Community Green Infrastructure Taskforce will help coordinate state agency actions, identify opportunities and barriers to community green infrastructure projects, and will determine how to best leverage funds to maximize impact to communities. The creation of a Community Green Infrastructure Program and Fund will provide resources and workforce development opportunities, highlighting how green infrastructure projects, such as increased tree canopy, can mitigate climate impacts and other environmental justice issues across the state.

Connecting Canopies, The Nature Conservancy's Portland Metro Area's Tree Canopy Program, is a proven example of how green infrastructure projects benefit local communities. The city of Portland has among the highest urban heat disparities in the nation and heat islands are disproportionately concentrated in neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestments and environmental inequity. A 2019 study found an 18-degree temperature difference between wealthier neighborhoods with more tree coverage, and lower-income, racially diverse neighborhoods with more pavement and less trees. Through collective community action, Connecting Canopies guides investments and implementation of urban tree planting and maintenance across Portland to increase communities' climate resiliency through neighborhood-level action. HB 3016 would provide a framework, funding, and resources to local communities to address climate impacts on a community level. We strongly urge your support of HB 3016 and ask you move this bill forward. Thank you.

Respectfully,

Sergio Lopez

Sergio Lopez
Climate and Urban Partnerships Lead
The Nature Conservancy in Oregon