

Submitter: Devon Lawson-McCourt
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure: SB1520

I wholeheartedly endorse Senate Bill 1520, a critical piece of legislation that takes a bold step towards economic justice for victims of wildfires. This bill is not merely a legal document; it's a beacon of hope for countless Oregonians who have suffered the devastating impacts of wildfires. By exempting settlements from wildfire lawsuits from income tax, SB 1520 acknowledges the profound losses endured by these individuals and families—losses that go beyond mere property damage to encompass emotional and community devastation.

The importance of this bill cannot be overstated. In a society where the gap between the wealthy and the poor continues to widen, the victims of wildfires often find themselves on the wrong side of this divide. These are not wealthy corporations with vast resources at their disposal; they are ordinary people, many of whom have lost everything. To tax their settlements would be to further penalize them for their misfortune, exacerbating their financial struggles and hampering their ability to rebuild their lives.

SB 1520 is a step towards rectifying this injustice. By creating an Oregon tax subtraction for amounts received in settlement of civil actions arising from wildfires, the bill ensures that the compensation these victims receive is not diminished by taxation. This is not merely a matter of financial relief; it is a matter of moral imperative. The victims of wildfires deserve our support, not additional burdens.

Moreover, this legislation recognizes the broader social and environmental contexts of these disasters. Wildfires are not isolated incidents; they are symptomatic of larger environmental and climate crises. As we work towards systemic solutions to prevent such catastrophes in the future, it is essential that we support those who have already suffered their consequences.

In conclusion, SB 1520 represents an essential step towards economic and environmental justice. It aligns with the core principles of equity, compassion, and communal support. By passing this bill, we not only provide tangible assistance to wildfire victims but also reaffirm our commitment to a society that values the well-being of all its members over the accumulation of wealth. I urge all who believe in a fairer, more equitable Oregon to support SB 1520.