



February 12, 2024

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

Re: Support for SB 1559

Dear Chair Sollman and Members of the Committee,

Climate Solutions is a regional non-profit working to accelerate clean energy solutions to the climate crisis. We strongly support SB 1559 to strengthen our state greenhouse gas goals.

SB 1559 would update Oregon's climate goals to match the pace and scale of emissions reductions that the science tells us are needed to protect Oregonians from the most dangerous impacts of climate change. We strongly support updating Oregon's statutory climate targets after 17 years to be 1) consistent with the best available science, and 2) aligned with the high level of climate leadership we are seeing from our fellow West Coast states. The federal Inflation Reduction Act positions the U.S. for a significant ramp-up in clean energy deployment, which also helps provide a timely opportunity and glidepath for states to raise their climate ambition now.

Strengthening Oregon's state climate goals

Oregon has made great strides to pass meaningful climate legislation in recent years. These building block policies passed by legislation and agency rules are starting to change the trajectory of ever-climbing greenhouse gas emissions toward safer levels a more stable climate and livable Oregon. The reduction of emissions from burning fossil fuels in our transportation, electricity and buildings sectors (the primary sources of most of our state's greenhouse gas emissions) also means much less pollution in our air, better health, more clean energy jobs, greater resilience and energy independence, and lower, more stable energy costs for Oregonians. There is still much more to do, but we've come a long way in a short time period and now is the time to build on that success.

This bill will bring Oregon into the 21st century by updating our long-outdated climate goals to align with the best available science and our peer states. After the Paris Climate Accords were signed in 2015 and many other jurisdictions updated their own climate targets to align with best available science, **Oregon has become further out of step by continuing to aim for weaker climate goals set back in 2007.** SB 1559's updated climate targets create a pathway to Oregon achieving its proportional share of limiting average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.



SB 1559 will strengthen our state climate goals in two major ways:

1. Update Oregon's sector-based greenhouse gas reduction targets to at least 45% below 1990 levels by 2030; at least 70% by 2040; and at 95% by 2050;
2. Direct the State to adopt net zero targets and carbon sequestration goals (separately from, and addition to, the sector-based greenhouse gas reduction targets).

To be clear, the state's greenhouse gas targets do not, and have never over the past 17 years, given state agencies additional regulatory authority to achieve our climate goals that they didn't already have. In fact, it explicitly states that in Section 1(4) of SB 1559 for everyone to see:

“Nothing in this section creates any additional regulatory authority for an agency of the executive department as defined in ORS 174.112.”

The climate crisis' impact on Oregon

Since our original greenhouse gas goals were set in 2007, we've seen incredible advances in climate science, climate and clean energy solutions, and the commitment to achieve necessary climate targets at the local, state, national and international levels. We've also seen stark reminders that falling short of our climate goals, i.e., not rapidly and decisively reducing greenhouse gas emissions, is already leading to devastating impacts here in Oregon and around the world. The deadly heat waves, historic wildfires, destructive flooding, multi-year droughts and bare mountaintops have become stark reminders that the climate crisis is here and we have to do more to rapidly and equitably address it. Our state's communities of color, low-income households, and rural communities are bearing a disproportionate burden of the impacts of our reliance on fossil fuels and climate-fueled extremes. These communities must be prioritized as we design and implement the clean energy solutions to reach our state climate goals, reduce harms and create sustainable and equitable prosperity. The first step is having updated goals to aim for that can achieve Oregon's fair share of emissions reductions.

The need for meaningful interim targets

The updated state climate goals proposed SB 1559 reflect the recommendations of the Oregon Global Warming Commission and Oregon Department of Energy's TIGHGER report. This report is based on comprehensive modeling and a multiyear stakeholder engagement process. Sector-based anthropogenic emissions targets will help us reduce emissions from primarily fossil fuel-based sources, including coal, oil, and gas. One additional improvement from our existing state goals set in 2007 is the addition of strong interim targets in 2030 and 2040, which is as important as setting an updated 2050 goal. Scientifically, to avoid tipping points and runaway climate change, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions we are cumulatively emitting into the atmosphere between now and 2030 and by 2040 (and conversely, the amount of emissions we are reducing by those time periods) matter as much and arguably more than just eventually reaching the 2050 state climate target.

ODOE's TIGHGER analysis also shows that we will see more substantial health and economic benefits if Oregon achieves this new 2030 target. In addition to stabilizing the climate, cutting emissions offers immediate air pollution reductions and related public health and environmental



justice benefits. The modeling also confirmed that the more clean energy, clean tech manufacturing and other emissions-reducing technologies we unleash sooner, the more jobs and other economic benefits we will create across the state as well. The entire world is seeking clean energy technologies to achieve necessary climate targets. We can send a signal that we're committed to making and deploying those technologies here in Oregon. Now is the time with generous federal incentives on the table to spur this progress and opportunity.

Why a separate sequestration target is important

It is important that the state adopts additional net zero targets and carbon sequestration goals to set a goal to unleash the opportunity to sequester carbon in our forests, farms, and abundant natural lands. Oregon is uniquely able to sequester carbon in innovative and beneficial ways for our natural and working land across the state. We are glad that these net zero and carbon sequestration goals are separate from, and in addition to, the sector-based anthropogenic greenhouse gas reduction targets. It would be apples and oranges to conflate these two worthy goals. Washington's greenhouse gas targets (updated by their legislature in 2020) similarly create both a 95% anthropogenic greenhouse gas emission limit by 2050 AND layer on a net zero by 2050 goal so that sequestration, carbon capture, and other technologies that remove carbon from the atmosphere play a role without artificially wiping out the need for a dramatic reduction of fossil fuel emissions.¹

Strengthening our state climate targets by passing SB 1559 is an important step.

Last year, the legislature modernized the Oregon Global Warming Commission, including updating its name to the Oregon Climate Action Commission (OCAC). The Commission was also finally provided adequate staff and resources to provide the important analysis and coordination needed to advance Oregon's existing and future climate policies as we strive to achieve our climate goals. Of course, we still need more ambitious climate action in line with best available science while rapidly and equitably transitioning to an economy powered by clean energy. We look forward to working together with the Commission, elected officials in the legislative and executive branches, agency staff, local governments, businesses, Tribes and communities across Oregon to achieve these updated climate goals.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Sincerely,

Meredith Connolly
Oregon Director

¹ See Washington state greenhouse gas emissions reductions, updated in 2020, at: [RCW 70A.45.020: https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70A.45.020](https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70A.45.020)