

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment
Date: February 14, 2024
Subject: SB 1559

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findlay, Members of the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment:

I am Dr. Theodora Tsongas. I am an environmental health scientist with more than 45 years experience evaluating threats to our health and our supporting ecosystems from environmental contamination resulting from human activities. I am also a member of the Healthy Climate Action Team of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, and the Climate and Health Intersectional Committee of the American Public Health Association. I have served in public health agencies for most of my career. I am testifying today to urge you to convene a work session and pass Senate Bill 1559. As you are the Senate Committee on Energy and Environment, it is incumbent on you to lead our state in our efforts to stem the worst impacts of climate disruption, including but not limited to its adverse effects on health, which we know from overwhelming evidence will accelerate and worsen as we take too little action. We also depend on your leadership to deal with evidence based public health emergencies that stem from our use of fossil fuels. Both of these are emergencies that require your immediate attention and leadership in alerting the people of Oregon, through your work in recognizing the emergency and making sure that our state's people, organizations, and industries understand the necessity to take immediate effective action to address these emergencies. By passing SB 1559, you are simply alerting people to the most recent evidence indicating that we must accelerate our response if we are to avert the worst impacts. This information gives people the chance to plan and work together to respond to these emergencies more effectively. Without your leadership, we very likely will fail, with much worse consequences than the droughts, floods, ice storms, heat domes, wildfires, crop losses, infrastructure destruction, and resulting increases in deaths and diseases that we have already seen. It really is up to you to take this emergency measure during this session. We do not have two years to delay taking effective action. It is up to you to put aside your differences and take effective action on our behalf as the citizens of Oregon. Thank you for your time and attention to our concerns.