



350PDX  
3625 N. Mississippi Avenue  
Portland, OR 97227  
350pdx.org

**Re: Support SB 1559, Climate Target Modernization**

February 13, 2024

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

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of SB 1559, on Climate Target Modernization. I serve as the climate policy manager at 350PDX, a grassroots environmental nonprofit with thousands of members in the Portland area, advocating for climate justice.

I wish to indicate our strong support for SB 1559, particularly the new targets for 2030 and beyond that would help bring Oregon's goals closer in line with the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's recommendations of keeping planetary warming below 1.5°C. Limiting warming to this level is necessary in order to keep our social and ecological systems functional and healthy for humans and other species to continue to thrive. **We are incredibly disappointed that this piece of legislation is not slated to move forward, and we urge you to reconsider: we cannot take a year off from taking climate action.**

Two concerning reports were released just in the last week that show the importance of **immediate action** to reduce our state's greenhouse gas emissions and other climate impacts — these are recent examples of why we need to take this seriously, but many other studies could also be cited. First, although scientists agree that the upper limit of warming that our planet can handle while staying in this climate system is 1.5°C, **the planet has already averaged at least 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures for 12 consecutive months** (February 8, 2024, [European Union's Copernicus Climate Change Service](#)). Climate change is already here and impacting our planet; **ignoring climate change and not setting new emissions reduction goals will not make the problem go away** — it will exacerbate the problems. We have reached this milestone of a year at or above 1.5°C more quickly than scientists estimated, and this can lead to tipping points of Earth's systems that we cannot recover from by simply reducing greenhouse gas emissions at some future date.

A second [report](#) last week detailed the **slowing of the Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC)**, which cycles the waters of the Atlantic, keeping predictable temperatures in place and moderating land temperatures, cycling nutrients through the oceans, and impacting all Earth's weather and rainfall patterns. The slowing of the AMOC is due to faster-than-expected melting in Greenland and the Arctic. **This change is not**

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**reversible in human timescales**; it would cascade into other tipping points, and it would create change so rapidly that it would be very difficult for many species to adapt. Such changes would make it difficult to grow food, due to unpredictable and more severe weather events, tip the Amazon and other tropical and subtropical systems into new climate patterns, create the need for massive migration to livable areas of the planet, and many other dire impacts.

We have already put more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere than the planet has yet responded to, so even if we stop emitting today, we have not experienced all the warming that is in store. We need to also **enact natural climate solutions** to help replace these emissions back into the soil and into their proper cycles so we can avoid these kinds of catastrophic events. **Waiting until 2050 is much too late to get to net zero, but placing these stronger targets is a good start.** We are already at 1.5°C of warming, with more already locked into place without large mitigation projects. This sets the stage for erratic weather, which places global financial markets at great risk — these types of impacts are generally felt first and worst by traditionally disadvantaged communities including communities of color and low-income communities.

**Although SB 1559 does not create additional regulatory authority**, it is hoped that our various agencies and government bodies can work together to help meet or exceed these reduction goals. Our state policies need to take into account the realities of how our ecological systems will respond to our current and future emissions. Our economy and society cannot continue to thrive if we experience more and more intense droughts, floods, wildfires, extreme temperatures, sea level rise, and more severe storms. We need to be serious about reducing our emissions now to preserve this beautiful state we call home.

**Please reconsider your stance on SB 1559 and do pass it this session: the physical and ecological repercussions of human actions are not partisan and should not be treated as such.** We need to all work together to ensure this one livable planet can continue to comfortably support human life into the future.

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