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February 15, 2024

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

Re: SB 1559 – Support

Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Findley, members of the Committee,

Verde is a community-based organization whose mission is to build environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise. We support SB 1559 because it provides much-needed updates, backed by the best available science, to Oregon's greenhouse gas reduction goals, supporting climate progress to ensure a livable future for the communities that we serve.

We have all experienced the effects of unpredictable weather events, from heat waves and more intense wildfires, to sudden ice storms and destructive flooding right here in Oregon. Our communities don't need science to tell us the effects are happening here, now, and that immediate government action is necessary. Passing the amendments to this bill is a bare minimum action that Oregon must take to stay on the path toward a cleaner, healthier, and more equitable future for all.

We know that our Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color will continue to bear a disproportionate burden of the effects of climate change if we continue to do business as usual. For example, heat waves are occurring [more frequently](#) than they used to, for longer periods of time. This directly affects farmworkers, often indigenous and migrant workers, as they are exposed to environmental heat during work. Multiple farmworkers have died from exposure to heat during work in Oregon. The number of days that exceed heat safety standards for U.S. agricultural workers will double by 2050, according to a [2020 study](#). Although strides have been made to protect farmworkers in Oregon, it is effects like this that show how urgent it is to get to the root of the issue. This is reflected in SB 1559.

At Verde, we have been following and supporting the Portland Youth Climate Strike Movement, and on a personal level, I see myself reflected by those in the movement. As a younger Oregonian, I am eager to learn and uplift those who have historically been left out of decision-making spaces. Unfortunately, the students who are actively striking, speaking up for themselves, and seeking education on climate change are not the only ones aware of the issue. Many more are full of pessimism, disheartened, and frustrated over the lack of urgency that is shown by our leaders. Overlooking SB 1559 only reinforces the view of young people everywhere, that our leaders are not truly looking out for us. These students need hope and need to see that bills like this get passed. To me, nothing is more important than ensuring a livable environment where future generations can practice their cultural practices, have their basic human needs met, and enjoy our natural

world as I have. I wish to see youth as hopeful and excited about the world we could create as we experience the clean energy transition as I am.

The sooner emissions are reduced, the sooner we can reap the public health and economic benefits of improving air quality and producing clean energy technologies. Greenhouse gas emissions and emissions that threaten human health go hand in hand. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Co-Benefits Risk Assessment tool, health impacts from polluted air faced by Oregonians cost almost [\\$88 million annually](#).

Oregon is situated well to be a leader in producing clean energy technologies. The amended near-term emissions reduction goals in SB 1559 imply the opportunity to increase clean energy jobs while also reducing the health effects of breathing polluted air.

SB 1559 is vital to demonstrating Oregon's continued climate progress. All of Oregon's communities, including low-income, rural, people of color, and youth serve to benefit from the immediate reduction of emissions that SB 1559 will lead to.

Verde is already helping our communities to be brought up through the clean energy transition, and SB 1559 backs up our work as aligned with Oregon's goals. For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support SB 1559.

Xitlali Torres
Air Quality and Climate Coordinator
Verde