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February 20, 2025

To: House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

RE: Support HB 3062

Chair Tran, Vice-Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Lewis, and members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is Xitlali Torres, I am the Air Quality and Climate Coordinator at Verde, and a member of the Healthy Communities Act Steering Committee, thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 3062. Verde is a community-based organization dedicated to building environmental wealth through organizing, advocacy, and social enterprise.

The Healthy Communities Act provides needed guidance to Oregon's local governments and industry applicants to require the analysis and mitigation of possible health impacts of industrial development on adjacent neighborhoods before permitting and construction of high-impact industrial facilities.

There is a vital flaw in our system that allows for polluting entities to be placed right next to families without clear public health considerations and protections, leading to disturbance in quality of life, safety hazards, and health complications such as asthma, and cancer. People, (a new mother, school children, elderly residents), do not deserve to have their bodies put on the line in the face of industry pollution.

I want to briefly remind us of the historical context here, that the history of Land Use in our country is not an equitable one, from the displacement of Indigenous people in their homelands to redlining, and the outright ban of Black people from living in our state until less than a 100 years [ago](#). We've come a long way, HB 3062 helps us go further.

Our systems were built to benefit a few, and although Oregon has had a rightfully good reputation for protecting our natural lands and farmlands, within our cities, we can see that consistent protections for people have been left by the wayside. Oregon has written its own environmental justice goals, as seen throughout cities comp plans and other recent [legislation](#). Now more than ever we must uphold our progress to equitable and collaborative planning.

We know that communities with wealth and influence in local decision-making are more likely to be able to push back on heavy industry entering their neighborhoods, and are therefore more likely to not be considered in the first place. Verde represents one of the most diverse areas in Portland, and we know that BIPOC families are at least 2x as likely to live near industrial areas than white families, and are often already more at risk of associated health complications. This is environmental [injustice](#).



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Through our engagements with community members in the Parkrose and Argay Terrace neighborhoods from high school-aged community members to senior citizens over the past couple of years, we see and hear from the community about their fears and shock that their well-being is not considered in these cases. I have experienced these impacts throughout my life, from hosting my friend while factory-related odor plagued their neighborhood in Eugene, to being woken up daily by trucks while living on a truck route in Klamath Falls.

Our communities lead busy lives, and the current retroactive system requires them to do the work learn about risks, push back on industries polluting their backyards through making complaints, and show up to meetings. This puts an undue burden on our communities. Community members have valuable knowledge about their neighborhoods and should be treated as such forthright.

We understand that the issue is not about a lack of engagement, but rather a lack of consistent and enforceable guidelines and standards in the decision-making process of local jurisdictions.

Through our engagements, we have been able to uplift and support community voices in Parkrose and Argay, unfortunately, not every community has a Verde, but I would love to see other communities in OR have the same opportunity.

It's absolutely correct that the industrial sector is a benefit to our Oregon communities, but as our economic sector develops, we must ensure it is done responsibly to avoid devastating consequences and conflict. Conscientious land use decisions are critical to reaching Oregon's own environmental justice goals.

This policy concept upgrades the outdated and time-consuming approach by creating a proactive system that ensures safeguards for the health of nearby communities if industry is placed there. It does not ban development but rather ensures protection and mitigation in high-impact cases when they are placed within 1000 ft of nearby sensitive populations. With the amendments, it will provide consistency, certainty, and reduced operational risks for local jurisdictions and Industrial applicants.

For these reasons, I urge you to support HB 3062 to ensure that Oregonians have confidence that their health and well-being are responsibly considered as our state's economy grows and that no one else has to face disastrous consequences of incompatible uses.