

Submitter: Laurel Viles
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5006

Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez, and members of the committee, my name is Laurel Viles and I am a Southeast Portland Resident. Thank you for the opportunity to speak about issues that are important to me.

I am testifying today to urge you to prioritize protecting our climate progress and continue to invest in our climate resilience. At the federal level, we are all feeling a great sense of dread for our climate and the progress that we have made due to slashes on clean air and water, affordable energy, and public land protections. The communities at the front of this are most affected by this; people of color, folks with disabilities, rural families, and all of our working class. Everyone will eventually feel the impact, but we must protect those who will be hit the hardest by these rollbacks.

Climate resilience is more important than ever. Every Oregonian deserves to breathe clean air, drink water from their tap that is safe, and be able to turn on their AC or heat in their homes during extreme weather events. I struggled this winter to decide whether to keep my heat on and pay the high price or save that money for groceries and necessities while bundling up and trying to keep warm in my cold apartment. We have seen disasters ensue in the past years with all-time-high temperature records with heat waves like fires that destroy our crops, smokey skies that threaten our health, and storms that destroy homes and businesses. For these reasons, I am asking for you to ensure that communities are adequately prepared for weather events that lead to the destruction of community health and economy.

Funding for programs like the Community Resilience Hubs (ODHS) would provide relief for the most vulnerable populations across our state. Please reject any new Oregon tax breaks for corporations or the ultra-wealthy and instead focus your attention on the communities that need resources the most in these climate weather events. Please refrain from making pre-emptive cuts based on speculation on what may happen in DC, which would be a signal to Elon Musk that you are willing to help cover the cost of billionaire tax breaks by sacrificing some of the most critical services that Oregonians rely on.

Thank you for your time, and for investing in our communities' futures in the face of an ever-changing climate.