

In Strong Support of SJR 28

Dear Chair Jama, Vice Chair Bonham, and Members of the Committee,

It is more than reasonable for every Oregonian to expect that their tap water would not give them cancer. Yet, across our state, Oregonians have been exposed to toxic water contamination with devastating consequences. In North Portland, residents have long lived with the toxic legacy of groundwater contamination from industrial pollution. Communities near the Santiam River still fear the long-term health risks posed by wildfire-related runoff and past chemical pollutants. And in Harney County, high levels of arsenic in well water serve as a stark reminder that without proactive governance, public health remains at risk.

It is not just our water that is at risk—it is also our air. Oregon has failed to adequately protect communities from the harmful effects of aerial pesticide spraying, which continues to poison our water, air, and residents. Despite regulations, pesticide overspray driven by wind drifts into nearby communities, exposes families, farmworkers, and children to harmful chemicals. Residents in the Coast Range and other timber-heavy regions have reported health problems and contaminated drinking water due to this reckless practice. The lack of enforceable protections has allowed industries to put profit over public health, endangering those who live and work in rural Oregon.

Putting profit over health allows bad actors to save money at the expense of our citizens and harm the lives of Oregon families and their communities.

We cannot ignore the ongoing environmental disaster at the Baxter Property, a federal Superfund site that has left residents suffering for decades. The toxic contamination at this site has persisted for generations, harming families, property values, and local economies. The federal government had to intervene because Oregon lacked the authority to hold the responsible parties accountable and effectively protect impacted communities. Why was it necessary for federal intervention? It is because Oregon's current legal framework failed to provide residents with the fundamental right to a clean and healthy environment. The state courts, bound by existing laws, could not uphold the rights of Oregonians to live free from preventable environmental harm.

This is why SJR 28 is common sense. It would ensure that Oregon's laws reflect a fundamental truth. No Oregonian should be poisoned by bad actors polluting the environment that our lives and our economy depend on. This resolution affirms that every Oregonian deserves the basic right to clean water, breathable air, and a healthy environment. It empowers lawmakers and state agencies to take decisive action when environmental hazards threaten public health. It ensures that Oregon never again has to wait for the federal government to step in where our state should have acted first.

Oregonians deserve these protections. **There are safe and sustainable ways to manage our land.** I implore you to support SJR 28 because it is the right, just, and necessary step toward

securing a livable future for all of us. Thank you for your time and your commitment to the well-being of our state and its people.

Sincerely,

Nanci McChesney