



May 1, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Support for Senate Bill 726 A, Relating to a landfill owner to conduct surface emissions monitoring.

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members and supporters of Sierra Club Oregon, we write in strong support of House Bill 726 A, which seeks to conduct surface emissions monitoring in a landfill.

Climate change is real as is the science documenting its potential disruptive impact. We are gravely concerned about present and future impacts on the quality of our natural and human systems. This is why HB 726-A is so important. The next decade is critical to averting the worst impacts of the climate crisis. Floods, fires, storms, food shortages and other unnatural disasters are becoming more frequent and more extreme. We must do everything in our power to ensure a safe, livable climate for future generations.

This is why it's so important to pass HB 726 A, which will require the owner or operator of a municipal solid waste landfill to conduct surface methane emissions monitoring, report the data, and fix the leaks.

Methane is a pernicious greenhouse gas; each ton of methane vented into the atmosphere will add the equivalent of over 80 tons of carbon dioxide over the course of 20 years. Estimates of leakage show a landfill's outsized impact upon the climate. A good example of this problem is the many disclosures about large-scale methane leaks at the Coffin Butte Landfill in Benton County. Following EPA inspections in 2022 and 2024, an ongoing investigation of the landfill ensued, which led to recent legal action by the Environmental Protection Agency, and concurrent inquiries by Oregon DEQ. The landfill has also come under observation by organizations promoting accurate and actionable monitoring, who have produced images in which the landfill can be seen leaking huge plumes of methane-laden landfill gas into the surrounding region.¹ Coffin Butte Landfill is just one landfill, but the same issues apply to most landfills in Oregon. HB 726-A will require the owner or operator of a municipal solid waste landfill to conduct surface emissions monitoring and report the data. Knowing how much a landfill is emitting is extremely important because we cannot manage what we fail to monitor.

¹ Climate damage from large-scale leaks caused by infrastructure failure, has been quantified by the climate science non-profit Carbon Mapper. Attachment A.

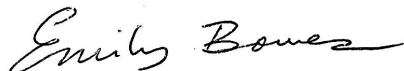
In addition, SB 726-A tells the Environmental Quality Commission to require landfills to test and fix methane gas leaks. Even though methane is the most commonly traced pollutant in landfill gas – due to methane’s flammability and severe and immediate impact on global warming – other pollutants are emitted as well, many of them are toxic such as PFAS.² HB 726-A does not address these directly, but a collateral benefit of fixing leaks, may reduce the release of other air pollutants such as PFAS.³

Current monitoring of methane gas emissions from Oregon landfills is inadequate. Most rely on a person with a hand-held measurement device to detect methane levels. Monitoring rules also allow the landfill operator to exclude monitoring some of the surface of the landfill if they claim certain areas are not safe for humans. Results are therefore incomplete, and under-report methane emissions. HB 726-A will remedy this problem through requiring advanced methane detection technology. This means satellite monitoring, flight monitoring, drones or remote direct monitoring technology that yields emission rates and the location of a methane emissions point source. A non-profit organization that has helped highlight inadequate monitoring in many Oregon landfills is Carbon Mapper, which has used new technologies to track landfill gas emissions.

For these reasons, we strongly support House Bill 726 A, and urge you to pass it,

Respectfully submitted,

Emily Bowes, Policy Strategist



² Air quality reports for Coffin Butte Landfill tell us that its landfill gas contains methyl ethyl ketone; methylene chloride; ethyl benzene; hydrogen sulfide; hexane; isopropyl alcohol; perchloroethylene; toluene; vinyl chloride; xylene – all released at the landfill in quantities over a quarter ton per year. Landfill air pollution may be as unhealthy as it is unpleasant, study finds:

<https://hpdp.unc.edu/2011/07/landfill-air-pollution-may-be-as-unhealthy-as-it-is-unpleasant-study-finds/>

³ Some landfill ‘burps’ contain airborne PFAS

<https://www.acs.org/pressroom/presspacs/2024/june/some-landfill-burps-contain-airborne-pfas-study-finds.html>