

February 3, 2026

Testimony in support of bill SB 1541: Make Polluters Pay
Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife

Chair Golden, Vice Chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Madeleine, my pronouns are she/her and I am the Environmental Justice Program Coordinator at APANO Communities United Fund (CUF), a culturally-specific organization that unites Asians and the communities who stand with us to build power, develop leaders and advance equity through organizing, advocacy, community development and cultural work. **I am here to express support for SB 1541** to require the largest fossil fuel companies to help fund wildfire prevention, climate resilience, and protections for frontline communities instead of leaving taxpayers to cover the costs.

I work directly with frontline communities in the underserved Jade District of Portland, where I witness the staggering heat coming off the asphalt that makes people lose consciousness on the streets without any shade nearby. The record high temperatures that threaten our health and safety are tied to the carbon emissions that fossil fuel companies actively promote. They must be held accountable for their impacts and take responsibility for climate resilience measures.

I live in southeast Portland, right next to the Jade District, and have felt the smoke from wildfires burn my throat and sting my eyes. I feel lucky to not have pre-existing respiratory conditions but my neighbors do and their health is even more at risk whenever the air quality index worsens. The extreme heat, the lack of adequate rainfall during winter seasons, the fast-growing plants that take over when ecosystems are unhealthy and then dry to make perfect kindling for wildfires are all impacts of an earth damaged by burning fossil fuels. We know the science behind climate change, so why are we still allowing fossil fuel companies to poison the world? The least they can do is mitigate the damages they have a heavy hand in creating with the power and resources they have.

My work at APANO centers on connecting communities with local renewable energy programs and benefits, many of whom have not been offered or have even been actively excluded from these kinds of opportunities before. Not only will historically underserved communities receive utility bill discounts and free rooftop solar systems, but they will also have agency to choose cleaner energy sources for themselves that benefit the health and wellbeing of their communities and the natural environments around them. We are working on a local scale to replace polluting fossil fuels with energy from the sun, doing our part to minimize our carbon footprint and mitigate the effects of climate change that people experience worldwide. Fossil fuel companies who have the largest carbon footprints must do their part and must do so proportionally to their major role in worsening the effects of climate change.

I actively choose everyday to work in the environmental justice field, because I care about communities, both human and non-human, and believe in the vision of a world where all can co-exist in sustainable balance. Right now, fossil fuel companies are pumping carbon into the atmosphere at such high rates that the only vision of the future I can see if this continues is a burning world full of death. We're already seeing this happen now. I want a liveable world and I don't think that is too much to ask for myself or my neighbors or my communities. I don't think that a liveable world is too much for you to ask for either.

I strongly urge you to vote YES to SB 1541: Make Polluters Pay. Please stand up for the health and wellbeing of humans and ecosystems and demand fossil fuel companies to do the same.

Thank you,

Madeleine Gefke
Environmental Justice Program Coordinator
APANO CUF