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On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1541
Topic:

I support SB 1541. One of the oldest principles in common law is that if someone is causing harm, the just thing to do is make them stop and pay for the damages. If my neighbor chops down their tree and it falls on my roof, it's not enough for them to say "well, it already happened" - I want them to pay to fix my roof.

Oregon is already incurring significant costs due to increased wildfires and extreme weather. Sixty-nine of people lost their lives in the 2021 heat dome in Multnomah County, and the 2020 Labor Day Fires left scars measured in lives irrevocably changed as well as hundreds of millions of dollars.

Whether or not one agrees with the framing of this bill, attribution science is based on reliable, rigorous, quantitative methods that meet and exceed the standards for findings of culpability in a court of law. The question this bill asks is who should pay for the damages?

Electric Utilities are being found liable for these fires, but this just comes back to individual ratepayers. Wildfires are one of the leading cost drivers of electricity rates. Other costs come down to cities, towns, and counties. Like the state, these entities are tight on funds and facing significant cuts at a time when costs are mounting. It makes much more sense to look to the small number of multinational corporations that have made obscene profits by causing these damages in the first place and ask them to pay for a portion of the harm they've caused.

Contrary to some of the written testimony, this bill isn't a tax on Oregonians - it's a way to claw back money from London and Dubai and Riyadh and Houston and use it to pay our mounting mitigation, resilience, and adaptation costs. A no vote is taking money out of my pocket. Vote yes on SB 1541 to make polluters pay.