



American Planning Association  
**Oregon Chapter**

*Creating Great Communities for All*

February 5, 2026

To: Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

Re: **SB 1541**

Position: **Support**

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-Chair Nash and members of the committee:

The Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association (OAPA) appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony in support of **SB 1541**.

OAPA is a nonprofit professional membership organization of over 800 planners and those who work with planning in formulating and implementing development and conservation policies at the state and local level. OAPA works to create sustainable and vibrant Oregon communities through professional development, advocacy for sound planning, providing resources to meet the challenges of growth and change, and embracing and promoting diversity, inclusion and equity.

An OAPA legislative priority is *to address climate change in Oregon's land use planning program*. Climate change, driven by global warming, is impacting the Oregon landscape today and will continue to have increasing impacts in the future. Impacts such as increased precipitation intensity and extreme water events (flooding and hazardous land increases), drought, heatwaves, wildfires, vegetation regime changes, and ocean acidification, to name a few, pose challenges to Oregon communities.

The establishment of Oregon's Climate Superfund Program through SB 1541 represents a critically needed, fiscally responsible approach to addressing the mounting costs of climate change. Oregon faces escalating expenses from extreme heat, wildfire recovery, public health harms, infrastructure damage, and ecosystem disruption; all directly tied to greenhouse gas emissions. By directing responsible entities to pay a proportionate share of these costs, the program creates a durable, equitable funding

stream that reduces the burden on taxpayers while enabling essential climate-resilience projects across the state. The bill's structure ensures that Oregon can move from reactive spending to planned, strategic investment in community resilience.

Climate change is altering the circumstances under which land use planning decisions are made. Land use planning elements that are impacted by climate change include:

- Guiding the growth of housing and urban areas, including the need to respond to heat islands, changing flood patterns, and migration related to fires and flooding;
- Protecting working lands, including agricultural lands and access to food, forest lands and natural resources;
- Fostering economic development, including changes to available jobs and emerging fields;
- Transportation systems, including impacts from changing weather patterns;
- Increasing the resilience of public facilities like sewer and water;
- Protecting our scenic, historic, and cultural areas and serving recreational needs;
- Protecting our air, water & land resources;
- Planning for resilient communities in the face of natural disasters & hazards;
- Strategies for energy conservation;
- And protecting special places from the Willamette River to our beaches, dunes, and estuaries.

We would like to highlight key elements of SB 1541 that we find critical in these changing circumstances and to ensure the success of the legislation.

- SB 1541 promotes more coordination and funding for state agencies to address climate change effectively. Section 2 creates the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program as an interagency response to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and to hold responsible parties liable for the costs of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions.
- The Department of Land and Conservation Development (DLCD) is directed in Section 2 to lead an interagency team to develop, adopt, implement and update a resilience implementation strategy that will identify eligible climate change resilience projects; and disburse funds to implement eligible climate change resilience projects.
- Section 3 requires DLCD, in consultation with the interagency team, to establish, by rule, a resilience implementation strategy with the key elements related to
  - ◆ Practices for utilizing nature-based solutions for floodplains, riparian zones, shorelands, wetlands, and similar lands'
  - ◆ Practices to adapt infrastructure to the impacts of climate change;
  - ◆ Practices for fast and effective response to climate-related threats;

- ◆ Practices to support economic and environmental sustainability;
  - ◆ And the criteria and procedures for identifying and prioritizing climate change resilience projects utilizing these practices.
- Section 3 also required DLCD to:
- ◆ Consult with local governments, businesses, environmental advocates, relevant subject area experts, representatives of environmental justice communities and other stakeholders; and
  - ◆ Conduct public engagement in communities that have the most significant exposure to the impacts of climate change, including disadvantaged, low-income and rural communities.
- Section 3 also requires DLCD to determine whether a climate change resilience project benefits an environmental justice community. SB 1541 defines an environmental justice community as having the term found in ORS 182.535.
- Section 4 requires DLCD and the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) to conduct an assessment to determine the costs to the state of covered greenhouse gas emissions.
- Section 7 provides that 30% of the moneys from the Program Account will be transferred to the State Fire Marshall for wildfire resilience, recovery and mitigation services and at least 40% be expended on climate change resilience projects that benefit environmental justice communities.
- Section 13 requires DLCD to complete rulemaking no later than January 1, 2029.

OAPA notes that this legislation also aligns Oregon with a growing national movement to “Make Polluters Pay,” mirroring initiatives in states such as Vermont, New York, Maryland, and Massachusetts, which have advanced or enacted similar cost-recovery or climate superfund proposals to hold major emitters financially accountable for decades of climate damages. Oregon’s bill is notable for its strong emphasis on environmental justice, and the integration of nature-based solutions, wildfire mitigation funding, and long-term health protection demonstrates a comprehensive vision that echoes best practices nationally.

To strengthen the bill’s passage and long-term success, ensuring adequate early-stage administrative funding beyond the initial \$300,000 appropriation will be essential to build robust rulemaking, data systems, and stakeholder engagement processes. Continued transparency, regular public reporting, and proactive engagement can help sustain public trust and demonstrate the program’s value as Oregon undertakes this necessary step to finance climate resilience and ensure the State’s most vulnerable communities are equipped for increasing climate impacts.

OAPA appreciates your attention to our testimony and we would look forward to participating in the DLCD rule-making that would be established by SB 1541.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tabitha Boschetti', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Tabitha Boschetti  
Chair, Legislative and Policy Affairs Committee  
Oregon Chapter of the American Planning Association  
[www.oregonapa.org](http://www.oregonapa.org)