

Submitter: James Allen Hallmark
On Behalf Of: Myself and other victims of wildfires
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1541

Dear Senator Golden, chair, Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildlife, members of the committee, and staff,

As a resident of Talent, Oregon, I lost my home and 99 percent of my possessions to the Almeda Wildfire on September 8, 2020, as did about 2,500 other residents of Jackson County. Not only was my life turned upside down, but I ultimately had to sue State Farm to get a fair settlement for my losses. Oregon hadn't experienced such devastating town fires since the 1940s. I believe the Almeda Wildfire and similar conflagrations can be blamed in part or in whole on climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels worldwide to drive our industries and our vehicles and to heat & cool our homes and businesses.

The ever-worsening climate crisis is threatening Oregonians' safety, health, and pocketbooks and is making Oregon a poorer state every year.

For this and many other reasons, I urge all the members of this committee to work with all your might to pass into law SB 1541, the Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program, also known as "Make Polluters Pay." Please get to YES on this bill as quickly as possible. Here's why:

As the statewide coalition Climate Solutions has written: "For decades, the world's largest polluters have knowingly dumped climate pollution into our air and water without any accountability, all while banking massive profits. Without course correction, Oregonians will be stuck paying for damages from wildfire, extreme heat, smoke-filled air, flooding, and more with our dollars and our health. It's well past time that polluters – not Oregonians – pay for the costs of recovery, adaptation, and resilience."

I am a longtime member of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now (SOCAN) and I agree with the testimony submitted to this committee by its co-facilitator Alan Journet. Here's part of his testimony: "The question we ask is simple: should those earning profits from a business model that imposes damage to and costs on society pay the price, or should those suffering damage pay the price. We argue that this is a no-brainer. Neither Southern Oregonians nor Oregonians in general who suffer fire damage and costs, or the costs of other consequences of climate change. We should not be expected to pay the direct price that these fires impose on us and then pay on top of that the price for fighting the fires. Indeed, the Oregon treasury is becoming increasingly unable to cover the cost (e.g., Ehrlich 2025). Rather, we argue, the costs

should be paid by the corporations reaping enormous profits from the product that increases our fire risk. This means that we should demand fossil fuel corporations pay into a fund that covers the cost of climate change to Oregon, especially the cost of fighting the fires and reducing the likelihood that future urban fires will occur.”

I, along with Dr. Journet and SOCAN, urge this committee to pass SB1541 as expeditiously and with as strong a “Do Pass” resolution as possible.