

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

Chair, Members of the Committee,

My name is Tara McLaughlin, and I am a small business owner in the Portland-Metro area. I am here today to strongly oppose the proposed “Climate Super Fund” and the added financial burden it would impose on Oregon’s already-struggling business community.

Let me be abundantly clear: Oregon small businesses are not an endless revenue stream for the state’s policy experiments. We are not the ATM the Legislature gets to shake every time it wants to fund another ambitious idea. And we are certainly not responsible for fixing decades of bureaucratic mismanagement, overspending, and lack of accountability at the state level.

Small businesses—salons, restaurants, retail shops, contractors, family-owned operations—are already operating under a crushing pile of taxes, fees, mandates, and rising costs. Oregon’s payroll taxes, transit taxes, workers comp increases, minimum wage escalations, and the new paid leave program have already stretched us to the breaking point. Many of us are barely hanging on as it is.

Now we’re being told that we should also cover a “Climate Super Fund,” a multi-billion-dollar slush fund that conveniently ignores the reality that Oregon businesses cannot absorb another dollar of state-imposed costs without cutting jobs, raising prices, or closing our doors entirely.

Let’s call this what it is:

An attempt to force Oregon’s small businesses—many of them women-owned, family-owned, community-rooted—to bankroll a political agenda under the guise of climate action.

If lawmakers truly cared about climate solutions, they would start by managing the billions already collected from previous environmental fees, taxes, and initiatives—many of which have produced little measurable improvement but have absolutely increased the cost of living and doing business in this state.

Instead, the Legislature continues to target the very people keeping Oregon’s economy alive: the small business owners who work 10–12 hour days, employ local families, provide community services, and reinvest directly into Oregon’s economy.

The message this bill sends could not be clearer:
Small businesses are expendable.
Our survival is secondary to political optics.
And the Legislature believes we should quietly shoulder every new tax without complaint.

Let me assure you—we will not be silent.

This “Climate Super Fund” would:

- Increase prices for Oregon consumers already struggling with inflation
- Push small businesses to reduce staff or shorten hours
- Disproportionately harm women-owned and service-industry businesses
- Further weaken local economies outside major metros
- Accelerate the closure of mom-and-pop shops that Oregon communities depend on

Oregon does not need another tax. Oregon needs responsible budgeting, transparent spending, and leadership that understands the real-world impact of policy decisions on everyday people.

I urge you to reject this proposal and stop treating small businesses as disposable revenue sources.

We cannot carry any more. And we will not survive if this goes through.

If you truly cared about the citizens of Oregon you will end this ridiculous proposal.

Thank you for your time.