



City of Talent

Office of the Mayor

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Senate Committee on Natural Resources and Wildfire

Submitted electronically

Dear Honorable Members of the Committee:

I write to you as the Mayor of Talent, a city of about 6,700 residents in southern Oregon, a city that made national headlines when a third of our town burned to the ground in the Labor Day Fires of 2020. We lost 724 homes and dozens of businesses that day. What's more, the fire destroyed much of our city's naturally-occurring affordable housing, disproportionately impacting seniors, low-income families, and members of our Latine community. More than five years later, we still have not fully recovered. Thirty percent of the families in our school district lost their homes, and the trauma is still very fresh and real for so many of those children and their families.

I have been a public official in this small, rural city for more than 20 years. For most of that time, the climate conversation has been about economic tradeoffs and public education. Now, the conversation is about survival. That's why the Talent City Council voted unanimously to support the proposed Make Polluters Pay bill.

The bill requires major, out-of-state fossil fuel companies to pay their fair share for climate-related disasters in Oregon and to fund solutions that prepare our communities for future impacts. The bill ensures the companies responsible for significant pollution contribute to addressing the climate crisis they helped create. Funds will be prioritized for wildfire preparedness and recovery and climate resilience projects, like home hardening and weatherization, that benefit communities hit hardest by fossil fuel pollution and climate change.

This funding would have made all the difference in Talent, perhaps even mitigating the conditions that caused the fires to burn so hot and to do so much damage. Looking forward, our cash-strapped local governments and fire districts will be better able to protect our homes and residents in future disasters caused by climate change.

Now, more than ever, we need polluters to pick up their share of the burden. Small communities like mine cannot do it alone.

Sincerely,

Darby Ayers-Flood
Mayor

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