

My name is Angela Coronel and I lost my home in the Rowena Fire.

I support SB 1541 (the Climate Resilience Superfund bill) because I don't think the community should be paying for what is mainly caused by big corporations. They make billions, so even a small percentage from them isn't much out of their pockets, but it's a lot for communities like mine. Our communities have far fewer resources, and we could use that money for prevention. If it's used for prevention, we won't have as many out-of-control wildfires and other disasters.

My husband and I moved to Rowena in 2022, right after our baby was born. We loved the place. It wasn't too far from town, but it had so much nature. Everybody in the community pretty much knew each other. We basically raised our son there. He's about three now. He was about two and a half when the fire happened, so all he knew was that place. He loves to play outdoors, and that place was perfect for him.

My husband grew up here. He won't leave Oregon. He loves Oregon. He loves being outdoors. That area was perfect for us, too, because we like gardening. We had goats and chickens. My husband did landscaping, and a lot of the landscaping around the house was done by him, even before we lived there, because our landlord that owned the home was his friend. We had fruit trees. We had just planted a new pear tree, a nectarine, and a peach. Our goal was to keep adding fruits, and we did a garden every year.

I came from California. You come from pollution, and you get here and it's like fresh air. Clear. Less traffic. You can feel the difference in air quality. You can feel the difference in water. I fell in love with nature and the outdoors. Rowena is where we planned to stay.

The day of the fire was full of not knowing... *Is our home still there? Is it not there?* We started hearing from people around us that their homes were gone, so we assumed ours was gone, too. We were never let back in and that was something huge that was taken from us. We didn't have the chance to save anything. Within minutes, we lost everything—our home, our belongings, our animals, and even our pet. Everything. All we had were the two cars we drove to work that day, and our child's backpack.

My husband lost all his work equipment. He did landscaping, and he lost all his tools. We lost one truck that completely burned. He had jobs lined up for months that he had to cancel. He had someone working for him that we could no longer employ. We had to pause everything just to figure out where we were going to live. We went from a two-income household to one-income, and that had a huge impact.

On top of that, my husband had been on dialysis for a year and a half, and we lost medical supplies and had to get everything back. Medical-wise, it made it very hard to move forward.

After the fire, it's been tough. We went from never thinking we'd lose our home to suddenly having to find a new place to live. It was hard to find because everybody else was looking too.

We didn't have renter's insurance, so we didn't get anything from insurance. But the community helped a lot. We got connected to the Gloria Center, and they eventually helped us get into a new home. But in the beginning it was very hard to figure out who was actually there to help. There was a lot of uncertainty. Some people in our community are elderly, and many of them are never going to get back into their homes. It's hard to rebuild at that age.

The transition has been especially hard for our son. He went from having a backyard, with trees, fruit, a garden, playing outside every single day, to living in a rental with no backyard. We've seen him experience grief. That first month he would start crying for no reason. At night he would get so upset. We had to start taking him to parks and different places because the house wasn't what he was used to. It's a good enough house, but there's no backyard. And we definitely saw a difference in him. He loved being outside, and now it's not just arm's reach anymore.

Rowena is never going to be the same. You drive through and trees are missing. Entire hiking paths were destroyed. The Columbia Gorge has been changed forever.

There's a lot of hurt and anger in the community. There are strict requirements around building in the Columbia Gorge, and that's made it very hard for people to rebuild. From my understanding, people couldn't build houses in ways that would make them more fire safe because of the rules. It felt like it came down to how things look, instead of safety.

Right now, our family is in limbo. Our hope had been to buy that house at some point. But we don't know if the landlord is going to rebuild. And frankly, we don't know if we would even want to move back anymore, living with that constant fear of, *what if it happens again?*

These fires keep happening. And disasters like these have a huge impact on everybody in the community. I don't think our communities should keep paying the price for something that big corporations profit from. Out-of-state fossil fuel corporations should help pay their fair share, so communities like mine have a real chance to heal, rebuild, and prevent this from happening again.