

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

Dear Chair Golden, Vice-chair Nash, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Beth Poteet and I am a social worker and public health professional living in Portland. I am also a member of the Sacred Organizing Coalition, 350PDX, and Ainsworth United Church of Christ. I ask you to vote yes on SB 1541, the Make Polluters Pay bill. I was taught, if you make a mess, clean it up! Due to the impacts of climate change, we are seeing hotter and drier summers with increasing wildfires and unhealthy air quality. As you are well aware, the 2020 Labor Day wildfires devastated the towns of Talent and Phoenix in one of your districts, while wildfire risks spread each season across the state. In the 2021 heat dome, 94 people died in the Portland metro area due to unprecedeted temperatures. Many of these folks were people living alone without air conditioning, including those with chronic disease and who are members of other vulnerable groups. These extreme weather events also create unhealthy, unsafe, and at times deadly working conditions for people working outside. During that heat dome, Sebastian Francisco Perez, age 38, died from heat exposure while moving irrigation lines in St. Paul, OR. Our winters are also becoming more extreme, with more ice and snow storms, heavy rainfall, and flooding. Extreme weather and poor air quality events drastically increase emergency department visits and diminish access to essential services like healthy food, clean drinking water, and sanitation. As a social worker, I am particularly concerned about the immediate and lasting impacts of the trauma created by climate change on our individual and collective mental health. As a mother, aunt and person of faith, I am deeply concerned about the ways that climate change will continue to create more suffering for us all and future generations. Fossil fuel companies have known since the 1970's that their industry would create the types of climate impacts that we are experiencing today. They have made billions of dollars in profit on the backs of everyday people. We are here today to say, enough is enough! If you make a mess, you should clean it up, and that's what this bill would do. I urge you to vote yes on SB 1541 for the sake of all Oregonians.

Beth Poteet