

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

My name is Blanca Gutierrez and I am a constituent living in Medford.

I am writing to urge you to pass SB 1541 and finally make these polluters pay for the damage they've done to communities across our state.

Not only do we need to build our resilience in terms of mitigation and rebuilding, but we need to expand our capacity to care of those heavily impacted by disaster. There are things that reach further and cut deeper than we can see at first glance. I've been hearing from fire survivors throughout the years and just last week one woman said "I still haven't truly recovered." She has a place to live, but there is contamination in the soil in the back, and it is a painful daily reminder of the fires of 2020. She has had depression and anxiety and has kept farther away from social settings for a long time now. In the Latino community it can be hard to have these conversations, and that tells me just how bad it is. There are still people without a home as well. It's been over 5 years since the Almeda fires and this is the reality that my neighbors still face. There is a price to pay beyond the immediate disasters our towns have faced and will face in the future, things that ripple out and lives that completely change.

We need resources to support our resilience. Establishing the Climate Resilience Superfund would allow communities across the state to start and strengthen resilience hubs, retrofit homes and public buildings to be better equipped in extreme weather. A fund like this could support our local food and water systems as climate continues to shift. We could provide vocational training for the jobs that will support the resilience of the state as a whole.

If you have the power to do something, yet side with the big polluters, if you are too scared to do anything, then this is also on you. If you are refusing to act then you are sacrificing all of us, all Oregonians, and one day that's going to be you too.

People have been paying in more than just capital for the heightened climate impacts of our time. The least that the polluters can do is pay for the damages their activities have fueled. That's the minimum. We should no longer expect our communities to pay the price for the mess the polluters have made (so far).