

Submitter: Caren L Caldwell
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1541
Topic:

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

In support of SB 1541, Climate Superfund Cost Recovery Program (Make Polluters Pay) Feb. 4, 2026 Caren Caldwell 124 Ohio Street Ashland, Oregon 97520
caren97520@yahoo.com I want to see SB 1541 pass this session because two generations of my family in Southern Oregon are now paying for recovery from wildfire. A number of years ago, my husband and I gratefully purchased a home for our oldest son. It was in a low cost manufactured home park near our house in Ashland. He is neurodivergent and needs the extra support from Mom and Dad. In his own home, he was able to keep busy improving the property and learning how to keep a budget. On Sept. 8, 2020, he was washing dishes at his girlfriend's house a few miles away (THANKFULLY) when the Almeda Fire broke out on the north end of town. His home was a total loss, burned down to ash and melted rubber. He had enough insurance to replace the original home, but after the fire, he could afford nothing like that house. And nothing in his price range was available anywhere. This climate-related fire, like the ones earlier in Paradise, and the ones later in L.A., had swept the Green Way along Bear Creek from Ashland to Medford. That's where most of our valley's manufactured home parks sat. The parks that were able to reopen a few years later were 4-5 times more expensive than the one our son had lived in. The new mobile homes cost tens' of thousands of dollars more than his original single wide. And the space rental had tripled. Meanwhile, it was the community that came together to help out the fire victims. Volunteers and groups opened up roadside hubs to give away food, clothes, appliances, tools, and furniture for those trying to recover. My congregation helped out. We paid electric bills for people who were placed in an RV park in Talent. Those connections established for me what it means to belong in community. During the past five years since the fire, the companies that sell fossil fuels to Oregonians have grown richer in profits by billions of dollars. But our communities continue to work toward replacing what was lost . . . by those who had the least. Many of our neighbors are still living in RVs or temporary housing. Many others moved out of town and have not been able to return because of the current costs of housing. I want the polluters who cause climate disaster to pay their fair share of the cost for us to recover. SB 1541, Make Polluters Pay, will create a recovery-oriented climate superfund with monies that big fossil fuel companies will be required to pay into. 30 percent of those monies will go to wildfire resilience and recovery. 40 percent will go to those neighbors who are most vulnerable to environmental disaster. My son and his girlfriend now live in Talent in an old farmhouse built in 1935. My family is so grateful that they are safe. But they can only

live there because my husband and I had to mortgage our own home to pay for theirs. And what about those who don't have that help from family members? Make Polluters Pay could make it possible for those people to come home again.