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

As a youth growing up in the mountains of Southern Oregon I have seen, felt, and understood the invaluable contribution the environment has had on the physical, mental, and economic wellbeing of humanity. From the water and food that keeps us alive to the exercise and intrinsic beauty that allows us to find healing and meaning in life, the planet and its resources is the single most important part of human existence. Yet it is not treated or surviving as such. From many years I believed that the waterways were pristine, the miles of forest were protected and valued by all, and the air was unpolluted until I learned how the world even in my own backyard had been altered by human “progress” and greed. From smoke filled skies forcing my grandmother and young sisters to stay inside for days on end to wildfires leading to fear of losing our home and community, the pressure on the environment has exceeded acceptable levels. Clean breathable air, fresh accessible water, and safe, sufficient food should be the minimum not the exception.

Each year I have noticed the heartbreaking effects of the carelessness of those who have inherent privilege and economic interest use their corrupt and untruthful power to reap profits from the land. The short term economic interest that guides the decisions of those in positions of power who consciously choose to believe their money is more important than human life have never considered the true value of the Earth to themselves as well as every other living organism that calls this planet home. The Earth is not solely something to be used and abused for the health of the Earth is synonymous with the health of humanity. We have not yet taken the time to realize and apply to our legal systems how related our actions to the environment are to us. If we use the earth until we have reached the end of its resources we have used up our existence as well.

Making polluters pay is not an attack on the polluters and their families ability to succeed in life, it is purely shifting where their money can be invested in and allowing them to reevaluate what they want their life’s work to go towards. Last week I participated in a student led walkout where nearly half the student body walked in demonstration of our belief in kindness, accountability, and community commitment over the hateful forces that some people and corporations have decided to follow. We are showing our solidarity for what we want to future to look like. We are crafting a world where lies, lack of responsibility, and unjust actions have no place. Where the voices of the people not the money is the loudest song that sings, protecting the vulnerable and healing the broken systems, both natural and human, that have been succeeding in creating a nation and world that does not support the basic needs of the Earth and the people.

Change is terrifying and inevitable and demands to be met with an open mind

and clear picture. I want to see a future where every inch of the political and social systems is not constructed to uphold beliefs that make people have to scream as loud as they can, die, and pay with their own wellbeing and livelihood to demand to exist in a world that cares about the only thing allowing us to breathe, eat, drink, and even make money: the Earth. I am in support of this bill to show the world that Oregon cares about the future and believes in its people and land deeper than out-of-state money makers and oil businesses. With a large proportion of open space and commitment to pioneering new paths, Oregon has a responsibility to lead the way to a greener, brighter future that our youth can be not ashamed but proud of.