

Submitter: Ann Turner
On Behalf Of: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Committee: Senate Committee On Natural Resources and Wildfire
Measure, Appointment or SB1541
Topic:

My name is Ann Turner. I am a retired physician and Co-President of the Board of Directors of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (Oregon PSR). I am writing in strong support of SB 1541.

Perhaps the gravest threat facing human health and survival is the climate crisis. Big Oil companies were warned about the climate dangers of fossil fuels as early as 1954. Nevertheless, burning fossil fuels continues to warm our climate, and the consequences are costly, especially to our health. For example, at least 109 lives were lost in the 2021 heat dome. From an economic standpoint, the Forum on Oregon Climate Economics found that wildfire smoke could cost Oregon households \$450 per smoke day for each day of exposure. (1)

I cared for patients at Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center; many of them were farmworkers, working in the fields for low wages to bring food to our tables. When I started working at Virginia Garcia in 1995, the issue of heat and its effect on patients never crossed our minds. That has dramatically changed over the years as our climate has warmed. The issue of heat-related illness is now top of mind for the staff caring for farmworkers, who are laboring in the fields with no shade and likely inadequate water and rest periods. Farmworkers experience a higher burden of chronic illnesses and those with underlying conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity are at greater risk for heat-related illnesses. High temperatures also raise the risk for adverse birth outcomes as well. Heat is also a cause of both acute kidney injury and chronic kidney failure, primarily due to dehydration. This is completely preventable.

We are paying three times for fossil fuels—first at the pump and unaffordable utility bills, second with our tax dollars paying for the damages of climate change and third, tragically, with our health.

The climate superfund would help the communities most impacted by climate disasters become more resilient, improving their health and well being.

I strongly urge you to pass SB 1541.

Ann Turner, MD

(1) <https://news.uoregon.edu/climate-change-cost-report>