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Cleaner Air Oregon makes state a leader addressing air quality *SB 1541 directs DEQ to establish Cleaner Air Oregon program*

SALEM – The Senate is moving forward with a bipartisan bill that would put Oregon in a leadership role in addressing air pollution.

[Senate Bill 1541](#) – which passed the Senate on a 29-0 unanimous vote today – authorizes the Environmental Quality Commission to adopt the Cleaner Air Oregon program, establishing fees for the costs of implementation. Under the bill, Oregon will join California as the only two states in the country to set an expiration date on allowing high-risk levels of harmful emissions from existing facilities.

“This bill makes Oregon a leader in addressing air toxics, and it ensures that the program is funded by payments from those who are creating the pollution,” said Sen. Michael Dembrow, D-Portland, who co-carried the bill with Sen. Fred Girod, R-Stayton, on the Senate floor. “This is a huge improvement on our current regulations and funds the program adequately to do the work we need done.”

The bill reverses two decades of declining investment in air emissions programs and creates a funding model in which the polluters, themselves, pay for the program. It also allows the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality to develop a pilot program to control toxic air emissions from multiple stationary sources affecting one area, located in the Portland Metro area.

In 2016, Gov. Kate Brown directed the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and Oregon Health Authority to develop new rules for regulating industry emissions, under the Cleaner Air Oregon initiative. The intention was to target pollution that is legal, but potentially

harmful to human health, a concern brought to wide attention when studies revealed high concentrations of industrial heavy metals in residential neighborhoods across Portland.

A 2017 audit by the Oregon Secretary of State's Office found that two decades of declining funding have taken a significant toll on the work of the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. In fact, the largest category of polluters have been operating under outdated terms from previous permit conditions.

The bill passed in the Joint Ways and Means Committee unanimously and has support from numerous environmental, public health, social justice and air quality groups.

"I believe the best solutions come from conversations with real people on all sides of an issue," Sen. Arnie Roblan, D-Coos Bay, said. "The last several months we have been in a number of meetings, along with DEQ and OHA, as well as employers and other groups. Everyone came, I think, with an open mind and an openness to figure out how we can make this work. This is a solution that takes all stakeholders into account and will improve air quality and public health in Oregon."

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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