

July 23, 2020

Cathy Macdonald, Chair, Oregon Global Warming Commission

Chair Macdonald and members of the Commission,

Thank you for your contributions to helping Oregon address the climate crisis. According to the Commission 2018 Legislative Report, and a review of key actions in the 2011 Report<sup>1</sup>, Oregon was at least 5-7 years behind and falling further behind on reducing GHG emissions, particularly in transportation and land use laws. Now we are even farther behind as the crisis continues to grow. These legislative reports primarily document the progress of reducing GHG emissions but can also review trends and recommend solutions and adjustments. I propose the following adjustments to be included in the upcoming 2020 Legislative Report.

1. Provide clarity on how far behind we are and why being behind is dangerous.

The upcoming report should outline how far behind we are in meeting the state's goals. It needs different and more express graphs than provided in the 2018 report. How big is the gap, how much bigger will it get each year reductions are not significant? How many years will it take to get to the annual reductions to be on track to meet 2035 goals?

Moreover, the Commission should recommend that the Legislature establish clear benchmarks and short-term targets, not just long-term goals. The long-term goals have not resulted in reducing GHG emissions. In fact, "goals" are arguably too vague: specific targets are needed. I recommend annual reduction targets of greater than 7.6% from 2010 emissions, and the greater than amount should be adjusted annually based on the most recent scientific consensus, or federal law. In October 2018, the UN International Panel on Climate Change warned us that we needed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 7.6% annually from 2010 levels, but also stated bluntly:

*Every day we delay, the steeper and more difficult the cuts become. By just 2025, the cut needed would be 15.5% each year, making the 1.5°C target almost impossible.<sup>2</sup>*

2. Accelerate the schedules for reducing GHG emissions.

The Commission should recommend that the Legislature accelerate its schedule for reducing GHG emissions through funding agency work, investing in climate-smart infrastructure in 2021-23, emphasizing, with analysis provided by the Department of Energy and others, the investments now will result in huge cost savings later.

3. Place transportation and land use actions on a fast track.

Based on the historically very slow pace of climate actions at both the Department of Transportation and the Department of Land Conservation and Development, the Global Warming Commission needs

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of these reports is primarily to "describe[s] Oregon's progress toward achievement of the greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals" of 2007 HB 3543. But they may recommend "measures the state may adopt to mitigate the impacts" of climate change on us, our economy and the environment and "to prepare for those impacts." They may also include climate change trends, emerging public policy and technology. HB 3543.

<sup>2</sup> [Visual feature: The Emissions Gap Report 2019](#)

to develop strong recommendations to the legislature and others that will place GHG reduction planning and projects on a fast track and keep them there. Please note that there is strong support in at least 31 counties for expediting actions as demonstrated by the recent letter to the Governor.

#### 4. Support Legislation on the Built Environment

Currently, some Oregon cities are ready to adopt energy efficiency codes, but lack sufficient support from the state and others. The Commission should propose solutions the legislature can take to provide statewide standards.

#### 5. Provide the public with hope and stability through Outreach and Education

Last December I urged the Commission to track and report monthly on the progress Oregon is making in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The public needs to know how we are doing, particularly if it is good news. In these times of health, social and economic disruption, confronting racism, and living with civil unrest, the climate crisis exacerbates the stress and uncertainty. The Kaiser Family Foundation reports that over 37% of U.S. adults are showing signs of anxiety or depression.<sup>3</sup>

Oregonians need beacons of hope and stability. When it comes to the climate crisis, the Commission can do that by providing the public with information and advice on how to contribute, such as by driving less. The Commission also has a critical role to play in keeping the public informed through progress reports and other educational outreach. It has a nondiscretionary legal duty to:

*develop an outreach strategy to educate Oregonians about the scientific aspects and economic impacts of global warming and to inform Oregonians of ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ways to prepare for the effects of global warming. The commission, at a minimum, shall work with state and local governments, the State Department of Energy, the Department of Education, the State Board of Higher Education and businesses to implement the outreach strategy. Section 11 of 2007 HB 3543.*

To the best of my knowledge, the Commission has never developed this “outreach strategy” to educate and inform Oregonians, although in 2010 it did conduct many public informational meetings and surveys, and the public input was used to inform the Roadmap to 2020. As we now know, the state and local agencies have fallen far behind, not only missing the 2020 goals, but increasing GHG emissions. Perhaps the Commission never finished this strategy because it has never received funding beyond basic technical and managerial support from the Oregon Department of Energy. This needs to change if we are going to catch up on reducing GHG emissions. Here are my recommendations:

1. The Commission should submit a budget request (policy option package) to the Governor’s office by July 31, 2020 for one full time equivalent employee to prepare and implement this strategy.
2. The Commission should hold a work session with the agencies and others no later than December 2020 to scope the strategy and how other entities can assist.
3. As part of its 2020 Legislative Report, The Commission should recommend legislation on public education about the economic impacts of climate change, embedding the social costs of carbon in legislative and agency decisions,

As the Commission continues to develop the legislative reports, I look forward to working with you to update them as more information becomes public. For example, the UN will be issuing its annual GHG

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<sup>3</sup> Kaiser Family Foundation. June 2020. [Adults Reporting Symptoms of Anxiety or Depressive Disorder During COVID-19 Pandemic](#)

emissions gap report this fall. It may have even more ambitious targets. I also want to share with you the recent Resolution of the Democratic Party of Oregon [Regarding Climate-Smart Economic Recovery](#), which calls on all government officials to prioritize and increase equitable, climate-smart investments, planning and infrastructure to reduce GHG emissions and build a sustainable future. This Resolution has been transmitted to both the Governor and legislators. Please consider the concepts and trends it in preparing the report.

As to the agency climate action plans, I want to share with you the letter to the Governor that over 530 people and organizations signed from 31 counties. This letter calls on the agencies to include equity and environmental justice, to expedite climate actions, and to use the social costs of carbon analyses in decision making.

Finally, I encourage all Commissioners to review the prior legislative reports and all of the sections of HB 3543 of 2007.

Respectfully,

Helen Kennedy

Marcia

Cc: Kristen Sheeran, Governor's Office

Angus Duncan, Former Commission Chair