

March 14, 2017

To: Members of the House Environment Committee
Re: House Bill 1646, The Clean Energy Transition Act

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 1646. This bill provides a solid foundation for regulating greenhouse gas emissions and investing in clean energy while seeking to reduce burdens on families and small businesses that will feel its impact. I am here today to ask you to support this bill.

I am a mom, an educator, and an environmental scientist. As a parent, I am profoundly concerned that we provide a secure and liveable planet for our children. As an educator, I know the importance of fact-based decision-making. As an environmental scientist, I am well aware of the extraordinary risks we face from climate change if we do not make a swift and consistent commitment to reducing greenhouse gases.

I would like to articulate some of those risks, because I believe they provide a framework for why the regulation you are evaluating today is urgently needed. I am the chair of a volunteer organization on Bainbridge Island that conducts citizen science and education for watershed protection. Our organization is extraordinarily concerned about the impacts of climate change on our water cycle. Climate change predictions include increases in extreme precipitation events for our region. These events translate into increased stormwater runoff and flooding, decreased stream and shoreline stability, and overtaxed, failing infrastructure like the massive sewer spill we just saw recently in King County. Reduced snow pack and glacial decline threatens our region's drinking water supplies, the health of our streams, and our winter sports industries. Warming ocean temperatures are a direct and serious threat to our already struggling salmon species, and ocean acidification threatens our aquaculture industry, as well as the foundation of the entire oceanic food web.

The economic and ecological costs of climate change to our state, our region, and our planet are quickly accelerating. Here in Washington we are spending increasing amounts of money on emergency response to droughts and wildfires in the east, and on severe weather events and infrastructure failures in Puget Sound. These costs will only continue to grow as climate change accelerates, undermining our efforts to meet our goals of protecting the Sound and growing our economy.

The good news is, the economic opportunities of a clean energy pathway are as enormous as the risks of a business-as-usual pathway. We are reaching grid parity with respect to clean energy alternatives such as solar. Since the passage of Initiative 937 in 2006, the seventeen electric utilities that must comply with that act have exceeded targets for cost-effective energy efficiency reductions in every two-year reporting period. We know that moving towards clean energy can make enormous gains for our economy and environment. With the federal government unwilling to make progress on this issue, there has never been a more critical time for states to show that they are willing and able to

lead on clean energy. Given the risks and costs of inaction, and the opportunities for new markets and environmental protection, the question cannot possibly be how can we afford carbon pricing- the question is, how can we afford not to do this?

HB 1646 is an important starting point for pricing the enormous unpaid costs of greenhouse gas emissions to our public health, ecosystems and economy. I believe that we need to reach for the most ambitious, science-based emission reduction targets possible, but this bill can certainly start us on the path towards real reductions that are critically needed. Reinvestment of generated funds into clean energy development and grid modernization moves us even farther towards these goals, and the proposed additional investment in clean air, clean water, and healthy forests helps protect our common resources that face grave threats from the effects of climate change. These are the right steps to take for our state's future. On behalf of myself, my daughter, my students and my community, I thank you for your leadership and vision on this bill.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deborah Rudnick". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Deborah Rudnick, Ph.D.
Chair, Bainbridge Island Watershed Council
Bainbridge Island, WA