

From: [Leah Wood](#)
To: [DOH WSBOH Health Disparities Council](#)
Subject: Statement in Support of EJTF Recommendations
Date: Monday, September 7, 2020 3:18:14 PM

Dear Environmental Justice Task Force Members and participating community,

I am a graduate student of Public Health and Public Administration at the University of Washington and member of UAW 4121, which represents academic student employees at the university. It is as a student, a union member, and as a lifelong resident of Washington state that I am writing today in support of the recommendations put forward by the Task Force to integrate and formally embed principles of environmental justice into state policy.

The impacts of exposure to environmental pollutants and hazards, including those caused both directly and indirectly by climate change, affect us all but do not affect us all equally. I recently lost a close friend to cancer which was likely caused by exposure to environmental contaminants; she was 28 years old. I wouldn't wish this experience on anyone, much less entire communities that are at heightened risk of sickness and disability by nature of who they are, and where they live, work, play, and study.

I recognize that Black, Indigenous, and other people of color bear a disproportionate burden of environmental impacts; this did not occur by chance but rather was the result of decades of discriminatory policy-making such as redlining and the breaching of treaty contracts. These same communities have for too long been excluded from the decision-making process and must be centered and prioritized moving forward.

Having spent the summer volunteering as a notetaker with Front and Centered's community listening sessions for the Task Force, I am heartened to see the care taken to engage overly burdened communities and respect their lived experiences by placing their priorities at the center of the recommendations.

The recommendations put forward by the Environmental Justice Task Force establish a foundation for future decision-making, and movement in the direction of environmental justice for our state. We cannot erase the mistakes of our past, but we can acknowledge the harm that they have caused and work together for a more just future. It is for these reasons that I support the adoption of the proposed recommendations put forward by the Task Force.

Thank you,

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