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Back in fourth grade I won a poster contest with my depiction of a deer by a stream in the woods and the exhortation to protect our environment. Those efforts predated the groundbreaking environmental protections of the 1970s. I never would have dreamed that more than five decades later I would still be fighting to keep our air and our natural environment clean and safe--this time from polluting fossil fuels and the carbon dioxide and methane gases that result from burning them. Unfortunately too, we can no longer rely on the federal government to do the right thing regarding carbon, methane, and other greenhouse gas emissions. We MUST act at the state level to do everything we can to cap carbon pollution to ensure we can indeed protect all of our environment. That also means we need to enact rules that maintain the integrity of the cap. We cannot create a cap full of holes for the largest polluters in the state--that cap then has no meaning.

We need to create rules that include measurements and goals that show all Washingtonians the current state of emissions as well as progress to the goals. We also need timely information about communities that bear the greatest burden of emissions now and why those will be the focus of concerted efforts in the future. Data transparency is key. Only then will people really understand the value of efforts to reduce fossil fuel-related emissions.

This cannot be solely a top-down decision-making process. We know that the top-down processes employed in the past have only served to perpetuate harms. Without input from the people impacted most by fossil fuel emissions, without clear and honest consultation of home owners, business owners, and tribal citizens, the rules likely will pander to the interests of the fossil fuel companies, lobbyists, and big emitters. That has to stop. Our collective future that is now at risk and we all deserve to be a part of the solution.

We all must work together to protect the environment that I drew on that poster decades ago. Thank you.