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What Drives Me

At the Heritage Farm in Vancouver, Washington, community members gather to grow fresh produce for those without access to healthy foods. The vibrant colors of vegetables gleam against the rich, dark soil, painting the landscape. There is a sense of common purpose that can only be fostered by individuals choosing to work together towards something that affects many people in their daily lives. In Clark County, 48,070 people face food insecurity. Hunger, on the local and global scale, will only worsen because of the climate crisis. More than 80 million people will face extreme hunger because of warming by 2050. This has resolved in me a purpose to affect environmental laws about health and agriculture.

I have consistently been told two things about human-caused climate change: 1) We must reject the modern world, and therefore new agricultural sciences, to survive and 2) Developing countries have caused their own pollution and food scarcity issues. No room for nuance or humanity, no consideration of history or lives. An intense fascination with the science of the natural world led me to delve deeper into the facts behind the claims of leaders and commentators. I began to recognize the gravity of climate change's devastating impact on food production, as well as the disparities in access to science and agriculture.

Volunteering at the Clark County Food Bank has been fulfilling but has also helped me see the challenges inherent in modern agriculture. For example, “organic” assures less chemicals leaching into our soils and waterways. But it also bottlenecks the yield of a plot and the premium put on produce limits low-income families' access to fresh food. The struggle to provide nutritious, affordable food while preserving the land for generations to come is one of the most pressing issues today. It touches every aspect of a livable global present and future.

Past failures in environmental regulations have led to environmental health discrepancies causing communities that face social inequities and hazards to be disproportionately sicker. Studying the Public Health pathway at Hela High School has helped me understand the world of community health and these injustices. Environmental policy must address these issues— instead of choosing decided ignorance.

These exposures compel me to uncover the functions of the planet through studying geophysics and attending law school to work in environmental public health law. I want to advocate for sensible environmental policy that prioritizes not only the health of nature but also the physical and economic health of people. We must move away from the “environmentalism” of the past that did not examine the inequalities that the climate crisis exacerbates. Instead, we must change how we think of justice for the Earth, not just as justice for nature but for humanity as well. If we want a truly sustainable future and to fix the issues in agriculture around the globe, we must start with new policies. I know that having the knowledge, resilience, and drive will allow me to accomplish this for myself and the generations after me.