



It's Your Oregon

**Testimony to the House Energy, Environment and Water  
Committee on HB 4112**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

The Oregon Environmental Council opposes HB 4112.

This bill would phase out the state's very successful Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program, potentially creating additional limitations on new and expanding industry and making good air quality harder to achieve.

Before I get into the details of the bill, I want to acknowledge that I represent an environmental group that is joining with industry to raise cautions about eliminating this program. The Oregon Environmental Council has partnered with business many times in the past: We have helped Oregon's south coast cranberry growers find higher value markets for their sustainably produced cranberries; and we have worked with nurseries and wineries on first-of-kind programs that reduce their energy consumption and help save them money. Oregonians value both a healthy environment and economic opportunities, and we must deliver both.

Which is why eliminating the vehicle inspection program is not advisable. The program delivers a cost-effective way to reduce smog-forming air pollution necessary for meeting federal air quality standards. In 2013, the Environmental Protection Agency is rightly poised to tighten ozone standards. (Ground level ozone is a threat to human health. It exacerbates respiratory illnesses, including asthma, a major health burden that cost Oregon over \$28 million in 2008, and the country nearly \$20 billion in 2010.<sup>1</sup>) If we lose the vehicle inspection program, we not only lose a valuable tool for protecting our air and health, but we also shift the responsibility for reducing pollution from the transportation sector to new and expanding industry and business, and potentially add new requirements for existing businesses. And this will be right at a time when the state would welcome just that growth. The program also employs 110 Oregonians in southern and northern Oregon. Eliminating the program would put those Oregonians out of work.

Portland and the Rogue Valley are currently the only locations that have the vehicle inspection programs. Right now, the ozone standard is at 75 parts per billion (ppb), but

<sup>1</sup> Garland, Rodney, M.S., "The Burden of Asthma in Oregon," Oregon Health Authority, December 2010.

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new standards could lower those levels to 60 or 70 ppb. Medford and Portland levels have mostly been between 65 and 70 ppb in recent years. When ozone standards drop, the vehicle inspection program could be the difference between those areas being in or out of compliance. If they are out of compliance, federal Clean Air Act programs require restrictions on new or expanding business and industry. We think that scenario unfairly puts the full responsibility on business and industry. All sectors should do their fair share for maintaining air quality.

The vehicle inspection program has been effective. It controls for multiple pollutants, like hydrocarbons, NO<sub>x</sub> and carbon monoxide, that are the main ingredients for smog. If the vehicle emissions program is phased out, the state may have to pursue separate programs to reduce each of those pollutants, which could be more complicated and expensive. These programs could impact small businesses, one of the main employers in the state. It would be counter-productive to eliminate this program while Oregon is still struggling to recover, only to create near-term job losses and hinder future economic development.

Over 30 states have vehicle inspection programs. States that are phasing out programs chose that path in advance of new EPA ozone programs. It is possible that some of those states would re-instate programs given new ozone standards.

Oregon has a good, effective vehicle inspection program that fairly distributes responsibility and soon will be needed more than ever. The current program helps maintain air quality and creates room for businesses to grow. I urge you to preserve this program.