

March 26, 2013

Rep. Jules Bailey, Chair
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 249

Chair Bailey and Members of the Committee:

The health and environmental effects of diesel emissions have been the subject of extensive research worldwide. Health experts here and abroad have concluded that diesel exhaust is a known human carcinogen at exposure levels seen in many parts of Oregon. These levels of exposure can also lead to increased risk of cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, especially in young children and the elderly. Moreover, diesel engines represent the single largest North American source of black carbon, a significant climate change agent.

U.S. emissions standards for on-road diesel engines have been tightened dramatically over the last 20 years; standards adopted in 2010 represent a reduction of over 95% in allowable emissions of both particulate matter and oxides of nitrogen from 1990 standards. However, the projected rate of turnover to new vehicles suggests that the benefits from these tighter standards will not be fully realized for 20 years or more.

The state of Oregon has historically funded clean diesel programs focused on exhaust retrofitting, repowers of non-road vehicles and pre-1994 truck scrapping. While these programs have been successful, all state funding has been exhausted. Moreover, a tax credit for new diesel engines was discontinued by HB 3170 in 2011 as part of the larger legislative effort to rein in tax credits.

Funding from the federal Environmental Protection Agency EPA is still available through the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA). These federal funds must flow to a legislatively established and DEQ-managed Clean Diesel Fund. However, the criteria for what constitutes an eligible activity under the Oregon Clean Diesel Fund are narrower than the eligibility criteria for the federal DERA program. This means Oregon statutes are preventing the expenditure of federal funds in ways that reduce diesel emissions and are allowable under federal law.

SB 249 would solve this problem by specifying that federal DERA funds must be spent to reduce emissions from diesel engines in accordance with federal restrictions but are not subject to the narrower Oregon criteria. We consider this a legislative housekeeping measure. It does not seem reasonable in this instance that Oregon should put more limits on the use of federal funds than the federal government has.

We urge your support of SB 249. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Randy Tucker
Metro



Laura Leebrick
Oregon Refuse and Recycling Association



Gary Bauer
Northwest Natural



Bob Russell
Oregon Trucking Associations



Angela Crowley-Koch
Oregon Environmental Council