



222 NW Davis Street  
Suite 309  
Portland, OR 97209-3900  
503.222.1963  
www.oeconline.org

## **Testimony to the House Committee on Rural Communities on House Bill 4015**

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**Angela Crowley-Koch  
Oregon Environmental Council**

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.

Oregon Environmental Council supports HB 4015 if amended with both the -2 and -4 amendments. While we understand the Legislature's desire to increase local self-governance, we also see the need for more transparency and greater public process. We respectfully ask the committee to adopt both the -2 and the -4 amendments.

While the Regional Solutions process is a unique solution to ensure that the voice of communities are heard, it also raises unique problems. While we greatly respect the members of the Regional Solutions Committees, we are concerned that they may not always represent the entire community. The -4 amendments seek to rectify this by ensuring a place at the table for local members of the conservation and social justice communities, in addition to the existing slots allocated for the League of Cities and other local advocacy groups.

In addition to ensuring that the committees are more representative of the community, it's critical that all Oregonians have a chance to participate directly, not just by filling out an online survey. The Regional Solutions process should follow the public participation rules that many other committee use, including 60 days notice and an opportunity for public comment. The priorities chosen by the committees affect the funding and priority of related agencies; since the Legislature does not have oversight over these priorities, it's essential that there be a robust public process.

Lastly, we are concerned with language in HB 4015 which directs agencies to "align priorities and purposes to promote community and economic development." Agencies sometimes have funding priorities that are not necessarily designed to promote economic development. Two come to mind – clean air and clean drinking water. Agencies have tight budgets as it is and directing funds away from critical public health programs could have devastating consequences.

In light of these public health and community concerns, OEC requests that HB 4015 be amended with both the -2 and -4 amendments. Thank you for your consideration.