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Environmental
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Testimony to the House Committee on Health Care on House Bill 4003

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

Oregon Environmental Council supports HB 4003.

Diesel engines have superior longevity and durability, but unfortunately, older diesel engines emit toxic exhaust that compromises the health of many Oregonians: in fact, 90% of Oregonians live where diesel exhaust exceeds health benchmarks.

Fifteen years ago, Oregon Environmental Council published a report, "Dirt on Diesel," that included a number of recommendations for reducing people's exposure to diesel pollution. Since that time, federal regulations for cleaner fuel and technology have resulted in high-performing vehicles that operate efficiently and with dramatically reduced pollution. But the task of addressing in-use engines was left to state authorities. To date, the Oregon Legislature has not taken a proactive approach to protecting human health from toxic diesel emissions.

In 2016 OEC published an updated report (attached to this testimony), which details the latest research on the health impacts of diesel pollution, why Oregon has fallen behind on protecting its residents, and how the problem can be addressed.

Our report and numerous health studies make it clear that Oregon will continue to pay a high price for diesel exhaust for decades longer unless we take legislative action. In order to protect public health in a way that works for our economy, HB 4003 proposes a balance of incentives and standards which:

- Stop the dumping of out-of-state dirty diesel engines into Oregon
- Set a deadline for cleaning up on-road diesel fleets and off-road diesel engines
- Accelerate the clean up of off-road engines used in public contracts
- Allow local governments to implement their own idling ordinances
- Prioritize remaining VW Settlement funds for the cleanup of drayage, delivery, waste hauling, transit, local government vehicles, and airport ground equipment

- Through an “indirect source” program, require facilities that attract polluting vehicles (certain buildings, properties, highways) to create a plan to reduce that pollution

The imperative to clean up dirty diesel is huge: To protect people’s health, to address environmental justice, and to combat climate change, Oregon needs to act on diesel this session. We simply can’t wait any longer.

Thank you for your consideration.