

TESTIMONY

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ON BEHALF OF
THE NATURAL RESOURCES DEFENSE COUNCIL

BEFORE THE OREGON STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

IN SUPPORT OF HB 4024
AN ACT CONCERNING THE REDUCTION OF GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS FROM
HYDROFLUOROCARBONS

February 6, 2020



Chairwoman Power and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of HB 4024. My name is Christina Theodoridi and I am a technical analyst for the Natural Resources Defense Council.

NRDC is a non-profit environmental advocacy organization with a network of 3 million members and online activists. NRDC has worked for several decades on the international, national and state levels to end the use of refrigerants that deplete the ozone layer and cause climate change.

On behalf of NRDC's 48,000 members and online activists in Oregon, I would like to express strong support for this bill. Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) are powerful climate forcers with a heat-trapping capacity thousands of times larger than that of carbon dioxide. That means that even in small concentrations they significantly harm the climate – and their emissions are growing quickly worldwide.

This legislation adopts into state law two U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulations prohibiting HFCs in uses where safer alternatives are available. An adverse court decision, in response to lawsuits from a couple of companies that were lagging in technology innovation, has led to the EPA rules being vacated for the time being. Oregon should enact this bill to keep those important regulations in force in the state.

Several other states are stepping up to fill the gap. We've worked closely with California, Washington, Vermont and New Jersey, all of which have already enacted legislation very similar to the bill being considered today. We are also providing technical expertise to an additional 10 states that are currently tackling HFC emissions.

These rules prohibit the use of high-GWP HFCs in the applications governed by the former EPA rules, which include aerosol products, foam blowing agents, commercial and residential food refrigeration equipment, and building chillers. Manufacturers are thus obligated to sell products that use one of the several alternatives that EPA has approved for each of these uses. The EPA continues to evaluate potential alternatives.

The prohibitions do not come into effect simultaneously. The bill provides a transition schedule that progressively prohibits the use of these climate-warming chemicals in new or retrofitted products and equipment. The dates in the bill are sensible and should not be delayed. They are largely consistent with the transition schedules being adopted by other states, which will facilitate enforcement and ease the compliance burden on manufacturers and distributors. The EPA effective dates have already been pushed back by several years and there is absolutely no room for further delays. The industry has had ample time to prepare for this transition. Further delaying the schedule will penalize the companies at the forefront of innovation.

The majority of HFC-containing products and equipment continue to emit for the entirety of their useful life. Prompt action will avoid the risk of locking in HFC emissions in the state for decades to come and will ensure that the market transitions to better, more efficient alternatives.

Thank you. I am happy to answer any questions.