

Please find below my written testimony on HB4167. For a google.doc that includes the footnotes, [CLICK HERE](#).

Representatives of the House Committee on Rules:

As a clergy member, I want to focus on several moral and ethical issues I see surrounding **HB 4167**.

I have three ethical points I want to raise with regard to this bill.

1. We have to be in this together. We need politicians to exemplify commitment to each other in the face of an emergency that threatens the very lives of all Oregonians and all life on earth.
2. Climate change threatens our very existence. It is an existential threat to all Oregonians. We must address it as such.
3. Younger generations of Americans, roughly between ages 12-24 have little or no hope for the future and even less in democracy. Elected officials must demonstrate that we are indeed beholden to our democracy; we need strong, transparent leaders to get us through this crisis.

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### **Introduction:**

At the outset, I want to remind us all that Cap and Trade is one of many efforts to deal with the cost of carbon emissions. It is an effort to use the market to transition us *from* an economy and way of life that is doomed *to* a future that could be one of thriving and prosperity.

Between the cost of extraction of fossil fuels to the cost of emissions related to its combustion (and including a host of externalities), a fossil fuel economy is phenomenally expensive. The current price per gallon does not come close to representing its actual cost, especially when accounting for a host of externalities. Rather, our country has artificially maintained low costs of fuel in order to maintain certain aspects our economy. I personally do not know if Cap and Trade is the best method of getting us to where we need to be. But I do know that if we do not make massive changes to move us away from a fossil fuels based economy very quickly, our shared future, let alone our way of life, is unimaginably bleak and incomprehensibly expensive.

### **We are in this together:**

Because of a variety of factors, our country has become intensely - dangerously - divided. In Oregon, one of the divisions has become manifest in the #TimberUnity movement which seeks to preserve the rural Oregonian "way of life" and which commonly expresses being the victim of the policies of the "Portland elite." From my perspective which is based on current studies of the effects of climate change and the massive amount of scientific research and modeling of the future effects, the reality is that none of our ways of life stand a chance against the catastrophic effects we face if we maintain the status quo. To speak of maintaining our ways of life, as they are, is to speak of impossibilities. We are now in a stage of trying to mitigate suffering. We can not maintain our way of life if it is based on cheap fossil fuels. But, if we can get ourselves to see ourselves as we truly are: in the same boat, we can eak out a future - perhaps even one

that is prosperous. But we must be willing to adapt. Rural Oregon, and the rest of us, have a future if we can stick together and adapt.

To respond directly to the #TimberUnity concerns: rural Oregon has no future at all unless we take climate change seriously and facilitate rapid transition to a green economy. Oregon *needs* a rural Oregon and rural Oregon *needs* the rest of us. We can sustain a rural Oregon but only if we facilitate adaptation and resilience. We can make those changes now, when it is comparatively inexpensive - proactively. Or we can do it later when it may be too late and will be much more expensive.

There is an ancient teaching in my tradition. A group of people were travelling in a boat. One of them took a drill and began to drill a hole beneath himself. His companions said to him: "Why are you doing this?" Replied the man: "What concern is it of yours? Am I not drilling under my own place?" Said they to him: "But you will flood the boat for us all!"

To get to the emissions reductions and renewable energy goals stated in **HB 4167**, everyone in Oregon needs to see each other as being in the same sinking boat. We need to be in this together because, as we did as a nation during World War II, we are going to have to reimagine our future, and make some serious changes, even sacrifices. But in order to serve the greater good, we will all have to be willing to make sacrifices in order to preserve ourselves and each other.

To face climate change head-on is to face the trauma of tremendous transformation. The world as we have known it for some time is *going to change*. There is overwhelming scientific consensus on this point and it is not economically, let alone morally, responsible to ignore that consensus or subscribe to conspiracy theories about it.

Change is traumatic. And to go through societal trauma, we need each other. If we really have each other, we can create a resilient and adaptable, and perhaps even prosperous, future for Oregon.

### **The existential threat of climate change:**

Climate change threatens our *lives* and all life on earth. When the youth I work with, and my own children, protest for sweeping policy change to move us to a zero green-house-gas emission economy, they are marching for their very lives; they are asking those in power to do everything they can to preserve some hope for a future on this planet, and they do so on behalf of *all*. They are not asking for their "way of life" to be preserved because they have almost no hope in that. But they are asking for as much *life* as possible to be preserved.

Only yesterday, I was tutoring a 12 year old boy for his bar mitzvah and we began speaking of a cherished Jewish tradition of handing down our ways from one generation to another. When I asked him about handing down our 3500 year old tradition to his children and grandchildren, he responded, "Well that doesn't seem to matter any more since I won't have a world to give them."

When we speak of trying to "preserve ways of life" we demonstrate our inability to grasp the scale of the problem we face. Climate change is bigger than WWII. It's bigger than terrorism. It's bigger than the nuclear arms race. We need to respond to the challenge of climate change in proportion to the problem.

## What is our elected leadership demonstrating to the youth of Oregon?

After the recent #TimberUnity protest, I had to wonder: what are youth learning about democracy in Oregon and in the world at this time? It would seem that minority voices with the most threatening voices win the day. Voting, I have heard many young people say, simply does not matter. All that matters is that you are able to be intimidating. Oregon's government will shut down as a result of belligerence and intimidation. Elected officials will walk out on democratic process. Our state will not respond to youth and it will not respond to lawful demonstrations. But it will shut down as a result of big trucks, threats of militance, and aggressive demonstration of physical power. Oregon responds to "Oregonians." What choice are we leaving younger people but to try to emulate the aggression that seems to win the day? Are we pushing our youth toward militance when we allow belligerence and intimidation to win over and against civil processes? Citizens, i.e. youth of today, who feel that their very lives are at stake - what do they have to lose? How desperate are they becoming? How do you suppose they might "up the ante" after a show of power like #TimberUnity and the quasi-militant walk-out of Republican Senators on HB 2020? And what might be the response to upping the ante? Are our political leaders fomenting violence?

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### Conclusion:

Our way of life has to change - as it has already many times over. It's true that some businesses in Oregon - rural and urban - are going to have to adapt or die in the transition away from fossil fuels. This is capitalism; this is a market based democracy. That is the way it is. But, we can get through this together, and perhaps even thrive, if: a) we are willing to adapt, b) we understand that we have the resources and the American resilience to work through the challenges that lay before us, and c) we do our best to love our neighbor as ourselves. To look out for and care for each other. *Our very lives depend on it.*

It will not be easy. There will be suffering involved. Massive change is nothing less than traumatic.

Because that is true, we need strong leadership. We need leaders who are willing to be transparent and forthright with their constituents. People who are willing to put political and monetary allegiances behind working together to secure a future. Leaders who will live into that classic American proverb, "United we stand, divided we fall." If we are united, we can do this. If we are divided, we will fall.

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Sources used for this testimony:

Ip, Greg. "For the Economy, Climate Risks Are No Longer Theoretical." The Wall Street Journal. January 16, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/for-the-economy-climate-risks-are-no-longer-theoretical-11579174209>.

Leahy, Stephen. "Hidden Costs of Climate Change Running Hundreds of Billions a Year." National Geographic. December 12, 2019. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/09/climate-change-costs-us-economy-billions-report/>.

"Climate Change Could Cost U.S. Economy Billions " Yale Climate Connections." Yale Climate Connections. April 29, 2019. <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2019/04/climate-change-could-cost-u-s-economy-billions/>.

Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus 4:6. Some date this text to the 5th century, CE. It is quoted in other writings as early as the 11th century.

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\*\* Please note: In observance of Shabbat, I do not read or respond to emails, texts, or phone calls from before sundown on Friday evening until the appearance of stars on Saturday night.