

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Chair Beyer  
900 Court St. NE  
Salem, OR 97301

March 23, 2021

Dear Chair Beyer and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony on SB 360, which would exempt small modular reactors (SMRs) from certain siting restrictions that apply to nuclear-fueled thermal power plants. Cascade Policy Institute is a nonpartisan, nonprofit research and education organization that is committed to protecting the reliability and affordability of our electrical grid. Allowing for the siting of SMRs in our state would promote reliability on a grid that is becoming increasingly more volatile. Cascade Policy Institute supports SB 360.

Newly developed SMRs are different from traditional nuclear power plants, like the Trojan nuclear plant, that the 1980 nuclear moratorium originally banned. NuScale Power, an Oregon based nuclear SMR developer, is leading SMR development in the United States after being the first company to file a license and design certification application with the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission and have an approved design. Though NuScale is headquartered in Oregon, they are unable to site a SMR plant here because of the nuclear moratorium.

NuScale is developing a new type of nuclear reactor that will be safer, smaller, and more affordable than traditional nuclear reactors. Its major advancement is the natural circulation of water used for the reactor's safety system to cool the plant down instead of relying on electricity. The SMRs can cool themselves down without any intervention in the case of a major natural disaster. Additionally, SMRs are significantly smaller than traditional nuclear reactors. Because of this, the modules can be produced in a factory and shipped onsite. Doing so allows costs to come down and ensures that quality control is more evenly managed.

Wind and solar plants are not currently able to power the grid by themselves given their intermittency, and battery technology is not developed enough to be implemented at utility scale. The grid needs some kind of baseload power that is capable of backing up renewables when they fail to produce power. Right now, wind and solar are backed up primarily by hydropower and natural gas plants. But with coal being phased out, our state needs the baseload power that SMRs would provide. If the Legislature is serious about operating the grid with 100% renewable power, it needs to bring SMRs into the discussion. And unless SMRs are exempted from the moratorium, that discussion cannot happen.

Cascade Policy Institute requests members of the committee vote Yes on SB 360.

Sincerely,

Rachel Dawson