



February 8th 2022

To: Senate Committee on Energy and Environment

RE: Support for Oregon Senate Bill 1567

Chair Lieber, Vice-Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee,

We are writing to you today to express our support for SB 1567 on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (OPSR). Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, OPSR works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. We are an organization of over 2,800 health professionals and public health advocates statewide working collaboratively with community partners to educate and advocate for societal and policy change that protects human health at the local, state, national, and international level. We seek a healthy, just, and peaceful world for present and future generations.

As health professionals and advocates, we have long been concerned about the catastrophic impact of a large Cascade Subduction Zone earthquake and/or a West Hills earthquake on Oregon's Critical Energy (CEI) Hub, both of which will result in fuel spills fires, explosions, loss of life, property, and devastating loss of environmental and cultural resources in the Linnton neighborhood, NW Portland, St Johns, the entire city of Portland, and far beyond.

We underscore the written testimony provided by Dr. Chris Goldfinger (Director, Active Tectonics and Seafloor Mapping Laboratory NSF/MARSSAM Coring Facility at Oregon State University) which reads, in part:

“During a major earthquake, liquefaction at the sites is a near certainty, and strong shaking up to 0.5 g is expected. The tank farms will not survive. Structural failure due to shearing and liquefaction will result in the tanks and their contents winding up in the rivers, possibly burning, and certainly spilling their contents into the Willamette River, and then into the Columbia. In addition to the obvious loss of a primary energy source, this will likely result in a massive environmental disaster on top of the severe damage from the earthquake itself.

SB 1567 takes some of the first steps toward resiliency in the face of the coming earthquake...”

We echo the testimony of Yumei Wang (PE, FASCE Senior Advisor on Infrastructure Resilience and Risk Affiliate Faculty, Civil & Environmental Engineering at Portland State University) which reads, in part:

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“Regarding tanks alone, recent studies indicate that only 2% of tanks in the CEI hub are up to modern seismic standards, and some of those may not have been properly mitigated against liquefaction hazards.

Imagine, a mad rush...on fuel, immediately after an earthquake, all at once. Real life and death situations—for search and rescue, fighting fires, ambulances, locating damage on bridges and power lines and water lines, and so on...

I believe that SB 1567 is the most important disaster safety bill I have seen in seven legislative sessions. It steers the ship in a corrective direction to address Oregon’s most serious and longstanding disaster preparedness problem through improving safety for all of our communities. It provides a smart solution to the enormous problem of fuel safety, and it provides a better safety net for all communities...”

We also incorporate by reference the written and verbal testimony of Maxine Dexter, M.D., who represents House District 33, which includes the CEI Hub.

Without prompt action, the picture is grim. Multiple ignition sources (including power lines and tank friction) will ignite volatile gases released from storage tanks and lines damaged by massive earthquake and subsequent liquefaction. Horrific fires and explosions will threaten 200 workers at the Hub, then move into the Linnton neighborhood, and then run uphill into Forest Park, adjacent to many more residential communities and industrial sites containing flammable and hazardous materials. Access to these areas by firefighters will be made difficult or impossible by landslides.

The Willamette River may become a raging inferno, with burning tanks in the river. Access to the river for fire-fighting purposes may be denied due burning fuels, debris, and hazardous material in and on the river. Burning embers can easily fly across the river from the CEI Hub towards the St. Johns community.

The CEI Hub, in its current state, is a threat to the lives and safety of CEI workers and Portland residents, while placing impossible demands on recovery teams. For these and other reasons, we actively work to support communities transitioning away from dangerous fossil fuels and towards dispersed, cleaner and safer forms of energy.

We thus urge you to support SB1567, one of many critical steps required to prevent the horrific human health consequences of spills, fires, explosions, contamination of water, air, soil originating at Portland’s CEI Hub.

Thank you,

David De La Torre, Healthy Climate Program Director
Regna Merritt, Advisory Board member
Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

