

Testimony in support of the renewable diesel bill, HB 4141, submitted by Yamhill County Commissioner Casey Kulla:

“Good morning, co-chairs, vice-chairs and members of the committee. It is so good to see you. I am a Yamhill County Commissioner and veggie and former licensed cannabis farmer. I join you today in support of the renewable diesel bill, which if passed will clean our air, improve irrigation, create jobs in Oregon, improve crop quality and yield, and be better for farmers and farmworkers.

This beautiful, sunny week, we’ve had an air stagnation advisory here in the Willamette Valley. That means the air does not get mixed and diluted, which means that we’re basically breathing exhaust. Exhaust is bad for you, it’s bad for me, and it is especially bad for anyone with asthma, COPD, impaired lung capacity, those recovering from COVID, etc. As a state, we have a responsibility to insure clean air and water for Oregonians. Renewable diesel is a step in the right direction, a step toward cleaner air and healthier urban and rural residents.

But there’s more: in the Valley, we grow the best of some of the world’s crops, from wine grapes to cannabis to shade trees. At the end of the summer, you can see soot, ash, and dust from a summer of farming activity deposited on our crops and leaves. The soot is bad for our lungs, but it also tastes bad and lowers yields. During the Labor Day fires of 2020, the smoke obscuring the sun for two weeks dropped our THC percentage by 5 points on our licensed cannabis farm (and resulted in a 50% drop in the sale price of our flowers). As you are aware, for grape growers, the smoke particles landing on ripening fruit risked a total loss of value due to smoke taint. While us farmers are a creative bunch, losing a huge portion of our crop value is still devastating. But, it is not just these extreme events that harm yields and quality: exhaust and black carbon from diesel obscures the air and deposits on crops all summer, chronically.

Making renewable diesel the first choice for tractor and truck fuel will clean the air, it will help us breathe better, and it will improve taste and yield for our valuable farm crops. Thank you for considering this bill and thank you for your time today. As you know, I’m happy to take questions anytime.”