

To the members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans:

Thank you for considering my testimony in support of HB 2601: The Treasury Investment and Climate Protection Act.

As a mother and a librarian at Portland Community College, I am growing increasingly alarmed by the severity of the climate crisis, and how quickly the window to address this crisis is closing. The most recent assessment of the climate crisis provided by the IPCC was summarized by U.N. Secretary General António Guterres as a “code red for humanity.”

At PCC, a team of us are working on a project to help address the mental health toll that the climate is taking on our students. We recently completed a small survey of students as part of the planning. Most of the questions focused on logistics, such as if they preferred in-person or online events, but we also asked “*Is there anything you would like PCC instructors and counselors to know about climate anxiety and how it affects college students?*” We were blown away by the intensity of their responses, some of which I will share here:

- *Climate anxiety (and generalized anxiety about the state of the world or this country) can sometimes make things feel futile (school included).*
- *The thoughts are debilitating. Even on good, "normal" days, there is the sense of, will this be the last year like this? Over the course of my life I have witnessed climate change, I was born in 2000, I used to get 4 feet of snow where I lived and now we are lucky if we get a foot. It affects decision making. It affects what I see my career being. I wish for a time where I could choose whatever job I am passionate about that makes me happy, but instead I find myself gravitating towards a job that rips me apart emotionally, but it is on issues that cannot be ignored. I don't know if I want a family, because I don't want to have children who may not have a safe place to live, I don't know where I will be living- what if where I live becomes unsafe to live in. It affects every thought and decision we make about our future.*
- *If one person tells me to 'be positive' or 'try not to think about' it in a meeting like this I would immediately just stand up and walk out.*
- *I'm sure everyone is aware, but there is a general feeling among students that there is no hope anymore, and that we are powerless to change how the biggest contributors to climate change operate.*
- *I would love for them to understand, that climate change affects the personal health of us students, and those of us with families. It also could be a danger for the college, as it can impact attendance, funding, and school size.*
- *It feels like there's not much we can do due to big corporations not making enough climate friendly changes that are big enough to save our planet*
- *On a personal level, I feel fearful that my family and other working class people won't be able survive and that makes me anxious. I get scared for my family in Brazil where the amazon, our largest rainforest is in constant threat. When speaking with other college students we sometimes become discourage about even finishing our degrees as it might*

seem like a distraction from fighting climate change/won't be worth it if the planet is dying and we are all doomed. I wish there was a way to talk about climate change without fear.

- *I was actually crying in bed last night thinking about how pointless everything is because we are destroying any hope for a future, so this is very timely.*

Imagine how horrified these students would be if they knew that their college's state retirement system is investing in coal, oil and gas.

Because of my concern for the future that these students and my own children are facing, I work hard as an individual to ensure that my investment dollars do not support the industries that are causing so much damage. I am frustrated that my PERS retirement savings are so out of line with Oregonian values. We Oregonians can be proud of the work our legislature and other civic leaders have done to reduce our state's emissions. How frustrating that we are undermining this good work by investing in the companies that produce the emissions we claim we are trying to reduce.

H.B. 2601 will end new investments in fossil fuels immediately. It will transparently phase out fossil fuel investments, consistent with fiduciary duty and statute. Significantly, it will reveal private investments (60% of PERS) using aggregated data, which will remove a barrier that PERS members such as myself encounter now when we try to learn what our retirement dollars are actually supporting.

I urge the legislature to listen to the voices of young Oregonians who want our state to be part of the solution to climate change. H.B. 2601 is an essential step in ensuring that the PERS investment fund aligns with Oregon values and promotes a sustainable future.

Thank you,
Roberta Richards
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