



February 17, 2023

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
Oregon State Capitol  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Testimony in support of HB 2601

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 2601, the Treasury Investment and Climate Protection Act, on behalf of the Oregon Chapter Sierra Club and its 74,000 members and supporters. HB 2601 is an essential step for Oregon to take to further its goal of combating Global Climate Change. Moreover, if passed, will free up public funds for investments that will benefit our economy, our democracy, and the PERS system and its members, for the following overlapping reasons:

- 1. Fights Environmental Disaster:** Global Climate Change is the most urgent and comprehensive threat to our planet and all inhabitants. Among its many consequences, it will cause disruptions in our food supply, make some areas too dry or hot to live in, flood islands and coasts, increase the frequency and severity of natural disasters, cause mass extinctions, and force huge migrations and consequent social strife. We support Oregon's goals to slash carbon emissions. PERS' huge investment in fossil fuel industries is clearly in conflict with these goals and HB 2601 will curtail this investment.
- 2. Shifting Economic Resources:** The worst thing we could do in battling Global Climate Change is to continue supporting the same corporations that have done so much to create this crisis, and to hide its causes. HB 2601 could shift this investment money to initiatives that mitigate, rather than worsen, the crisis. We will need new paradigms and new forward-thinking industries, plus a revolution in efficiency, clean energy, and related innovations to make progress against this threat. We should shift PERS investments to these diverse ways forward, rather than continue to fund the huge corporations that work to prolong an unsustainable status quo.
- 3. Bolstering Democracy:** The lack of transparency in Oregon's investment portfolio has enabled and perpetuated this misallocation of PERS contributions. Transparency in public policy is essential to citizen power and leads to a more effective and trusted democracy. Given that PERS is a vital public endeavor, it is a moral imperative that citizens know where their money is

going and thus can better steer those resources toward building a healthier planet. HB 2601 will increase transparency.

**4. Preventing Unwise Investments:** Fossil fuel industries will shrink as Global Climate Change becomes more evident and dire. Stock values will drop as usage is phased out. Therefore, fossil fuels are a poor long-range investment and jeopardizes the financial futures of Oregon retirees. The sooner Oregon citizens and their governmental representatives face this coming change by adjusting our state's investments, the more secure Oregon's economy and our retirees, present and future, will be.

**5. Stabilizing Our Economy:** Economically, PERS retiree spending functions as a statewide safety net, much as Social Security does for the nation's economy. Investment in fossil fuels jeopardizes the security of PERS funds.

The challenges we face in this century will have more to do with public welfare— food supplies, natural disasters, autocratic government, health issues— and less to do with temporary profits and policies that further benefit the well off. Only an informed citizenry, insisting that its government responds to the People's needs, will save us from these challenges.

We urge you to vote yes on HB 2601. Thank you.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Dix  
Chair, Legislative Committee  
Oregon Chapter Sierra Club