

# OREGON PSR

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

To House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

Re: Oppose HB 2215

February 22, 2023

Chair Marsh, Vice Chairs Levy and Levy, and Members of the Committee:

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility provides this testimony in opposition to HB 2215.

Guided by the values and expertise of healthcare and public health, Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) 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.

We ask that you reject House Bill 2215 for the following reasons:

The 1980 resolution passed by a vote of the people of Oregon was to protect the State and the living beings within it from the well known and documented threats of nuclear contamination of our air, water, land, wildlife, and people that come with nuclear power. The people understood the risks at the time of that vote and they still understand and reject the inherent dangers and adverse impacts on life and health that permitting nuclear reactors would bring to our state. Those risks have not diminished in the time since that vote, in fact they may be greater.

There is no permanent repository for nuclear waste generated by nuclear power plants and that waste remains toxic and radioactive for thousands of years.

Nuclear waste is generated by both existing and proposed small modular nuclear power (SMNR) plants and it is stored onsite at those plants. The so-called small modular nuclear reactors or SMNRs will generate as much or more nuclear waste per kilowatt hour of electricity generated than conventional nuclear power plants. **There is nowhere to put the waste generated by existing and proposed nuclear power plants and the waste remains toxic and radioactive and harmful to life and health for thousands of years.**

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The US affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Recipient of the 1985 Nobel Peace Prize

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Even the nuclear power plants that have been “decommissioned”, including the Trojan Plant in Oregon, still store the nuclear wastes generated during its operations on site, and there is no place for that waste to go.

Nuclear power is not clean nor is it green or carbon-free: Look at the full life cycle: uranium mining and milling sites are permanently contaminated but they have not been prevented from leaking into rivers, streams and aquifers and contaminating drinking water supplies and farmland. Mining, milling, processing, and transportation of the fuel, and construction of the power plants are dependent on fossil fuels.

Environmental justice issues run rampant through this industry in that communities have and will continue to bear the brunt of the health, environmental, economic and safety risks of this industry, not the profit making organizations that run this industry. No other industry has been absolved of responsibility for its waste. Uranium mining and milling sites have been placed in indigenous and low income communities. Indigenous people in the US and worldwide have disproportionately borne the harms from uranium mining, fuel processing, and radioactive waste disposal.

The safety risks are being ignored: these plants cannot be just plunked down anywhere due to the extreme difficulties of keeping them secure; the risk of sabotage or theft of weapons grade or near weapons grade material cannot be reduced.

Because reactors make plutonium, they increase the danger of proliferation of nuclear weapons and increase the risks of accidents, terrorism, or intentional use of these weapons, and nuclear war.

Risks of meltdown are very real as seen at 3-mile island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima with adverse impacts locally, regionally, and world wide. Seismic risks cannot be ruled out, as we have seen at Fukushima. The trojan nuclear power plant 's waste is still sited in an earthquake zone, with high risk of a level 7-9 earthquake due to the Cascadia subduction zone.

Great quantities of water are needed for cooling and this heated water is released into the environment with resultant adverse effects on wild and aquatic life. As clean drinking water supplies are becoming rare and water resources even rarer in many parts of the world, the availability of water for cooling becomes a safety issue as well as forcing interruptions in operation and power production, as was seen in France during the climate induced heat waves last year.

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Nuclear power plants are costly to build and operate and require enormous taxpayer subsidies, government loan guarantees, and will only add to the burden of consumers struggling with increased energy costs. Dollars spent on unproven “new generation” nuclear plants should instead be used for enhancing the resilience of the electrical grid by investing in safe renewable sources, energy efficiency and conservation.

House Bill 2215 ignores the will of the people of Oregon, the people that still understand and reject the inherent dangers and adverse impacts on life and health that permitting nuclear power plants would bring to our state. The 1980 resolution passed by a vote of the people of this state was to protect the state and the living beings within it from the well-known and well documented threat of nuclear contamination of our air, water, land, wildlife and people that comes with nuclear power. We ask you to show consistency and respect for the people of this state and understand the rationale for the decision by them was, and is, to protect themselves and generations to come.



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