

March 30, 2023

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Testimony HB 5018: Appropriates moneys from General Fund to Department of Environmental Quality for certain biennial expenses

Co-Chair Senator Pham, Co-Chair Senator Dembrow, and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Natural Resources,

My name is Samantha Hernandez and I am submitting testimony on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility, an organization of over 2,000 health professionals and public health advocates from across the state working to address the gravest threats to health and survival.

The Title V program is essential for ensuring the largest emitters comply with all state and federal requirements. The Title V program is integral to protecting the public health of communities and providing information to the public. Oregon DEQ has an obligation to maintain a fully functioning Title V air permitting program. As noted in the Secretary of State audit, the Title V program has had staff deficiencies for years. At current levels, fee revenue is insufficient to maintain staffing levels in the 2023-25 biennium and beyond. Although the program statute allows for an annual fee adjustment to account for inflation, the actual rate of inflation has outpaced the rate authorized for years. The proposed increases are the first in over a decade, and put Oregon's fees in the average of other Region 10 programs.

We urge the members of this committee to move this bill forward with a Do-Pass recommendation so that the Title V program is adequately funded to continue regulating emissions from the largest and most complex sources of air pollution.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify,  
Samantha Hernandez

