

OREGON PSR

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

RE: Support HB 4044
House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Thursday, February 8th

Chair Grayber, Vice Chair Lewis, Vice Chair Tran, and members of the House Committee On
Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans,

My name is Samantha Hernandez and I am the Healthy Climate Program Director at Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility (Oregon PSR), 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. I am submitting this testimony on behalf of Oregon PSR to voice our support for HB 4044.

Just last year, "Risk of Earthquake-Induced Hazardous Materials Releases in Multnomah County, Oregon" was released by Portland State University's Institute for Sustainable Solutions. This timely and informative report demonstrates the urgent need for further studies on risks and issues related to earthquake-induced toxic inhalation. The report discusses numerous life safety and public health risks, including hazardous air quality. The release of light oils, such as gasoline, in the Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) Hub following a Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) earthquake will produce plumes of toxic chemicals including benzene, a carcinogen, while oil fires will release health harming pollutants like volatile organic compounds and particulate matter.

Moreover, scientists predict there is about a 37% chance that an earthquake of 7.1+ magnitude in the CSZ will occur in the next 50 years. HB 4044 is needed to fill the research gaps necessary to improve protection of public health from earthquake-induced toxic inhalation. For example, two of the research recommendations mentioned in the report include updating the hazard vulnerability assessment and performing additional quantitative risk assessments. This bill will provide more thorough analyses on the risks of earthquake-induced toxic inhalation that will inform better mitigation, preparedness, and response efforts before it is too late. Oregon PSR strongly urges you to pass HB 4044 out of the committee.

Thank you,

Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility

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

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