

Senate Committee on Energy and Environment  
Re: HB 4083 The COAL Act  
2/21/2024

Greetings Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Findley, and Members of the Committee

I am Dr. Theodora Tsongas, an environmental health scientist specializing in epidemiology with a career in public health. I am a member of the Healthy Climate Action Team of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility as well as the Climate and Health Committee of the American Public Health Association. The majority of my career has been in public health at the State and Federal levels, including the Health Division of the Oregon Health Authority. I am a PERS member.

I strongly support HB 4083. Because of my understanding of the scientific evidence regarding the role of fossil fuels in causing climate disruption and the adverse effects on health of both climate disruption and fossil fuel emissions, I have listened to my conscience and have tried, to the best of my ability, to remove fossil fuel investments from my savings. However, the Oregon Investment Council and State Treasurer have made it impossible for me to handle my finances according to my conscience, values, and dedication to promoting public health. HB 4083 will begin a necessary transition away from bad investments in fossil fuels.

But, I oppose the —1 Amendment because it changes the definition of "Clean Energy" from: "energy produced through methods that do not release greenhouse gas emissions or other pollutants in any stage of acquisition, production, transportation, storage or use." to: 'nonemitting electricity'.

What this change does is allow the State Treasurer to retain an investment in a thermal coal company if the company demonstrates that it is transitioning to 'clean energy' on a reasonable timeline. The term nonemitting is ambiguous in that it excludes emissions of fossil fuels during the full life cycle of production, transportation, and storage of the fuel, which are quite considerable.

The definition of clean in the —1 amendment would allow a coal company to transition to nuclear power, which is and has been unacceptable to Oregon voters for many years. For example, Pacific Power is apparently considering a transition to small modular nuclear reactors to replace its coal plants. If we don't allow nuclear reactors in our state, then why would we want to invest our funds in nuclear power in other states, with all its harms to health and the environment impacting us all, as well as being a bad investment.

Just because we made a critical error in defining 'clean energy' in ORS 469A.400, doesn't mean we have to perpetuate it in this bill.

Please reject the —1 amendment, and please pass House Bill 4083.

Thank you for your time and your consideration of my concerns.