

Submitter: Anna Kahler
On Behalf Of: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB685

Chair Lively and Committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

My name is Anna Kahler and I work for Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility. We are 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.

Oregon PSR is testifying today in support of SB 685-2 . In June 2022, the American Medical Association (AMA) acknowledged the harms of fossil hydrogen, passing a resolution recognizing “the health, safety, and climate risks of current methods of producing fossil fuel-derived hydrogen and the dangers of adding hydrogen to natural gas.” The AMA further resolved to advocate to appropriate government agencies such as the EPA and the Department of Energy, and federal legislative bodies, about these risks.

Hydrogen ignites more easily and is more explosive than methane, increasing the danger of explosions in buildings. Methane leaks inside residential and commercial buildings when appliances are in use and when they are turned off. Hydrogen could make these leaks more dangerous.

NW Natural, a natural gas utility in Oregon, has announced plans to begin blending hydrogen into its gas supply at an initial concentration of 0.2%—a relatively low level. However, according to information available on the company’s website, the long-term goal appears to be increasing the hydrogen concentration to 5%, and potentially up to 20%. Despite referencing ongoing leak testing, the company has not disclosed data on leak rates associated with these higher concentrations. Furthermore, the site does not specify the types of pipelines being tested or whether these include materials known to be susceptible to hydrogen-related degradation.

The production of hydrogen from methane and burning hydrogen gas in buildings will contribute to air pollution that contributes to asthma, heart disease, and premature deaths. Environmental Justice communities will be harmed disproportionately on top of the health burdens they already face.

If you, the members of this committee, are truly committed to the health and well being of your constituents, you must act in ways that align with your commitment. I am asking you today to prioritize the health and safety of Oregonians and support SB 685 to

Thank you for your time and consideration.