

Testimony to the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment**Re: HB 4144****February 03, 2026****Crystal Weston, Environmental Health Director
Oregon Environmental Council**

Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council support for HB 4144

Dear Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC), a non-partisan, environmental nonprofit that works at the nexus of human health and the environment, I write to express OEC's strong support for HB 4144 Safe battery collection and recycling. Over its 57-year history, OEC has worked on multiple efforts to manage solid waste so as to protect people and the environment responsibly and sustainably.

Battery-caused fires have become more frequent at garbage and recycling facilities across Oregon, with fires breaking out at some facilities weekly. Solid waste fires release a toxic brew of chemicals, including heavy metals, PFAS forever chemicals, and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These fires require special equipment to extinguish and endanger the immediate safety and long term health of workers. Solid waste management infrastructure investments also can literally go up in smoke and the fires represent risks that add costs to operations.

This bill creates a battery extended producer responsibility program (EPR). Battery manufacturers would manage and pay for the collection, transport, and recycling of single use and rechargeable batteries. This would protect garbage and recycling workers from the fire hazards caused by batteries. It will also create jobs focused on proper battery disposal, allow for materials recovery, and reduce costs associated with unpredictable fires and health impacts from associated hazards. Like other EPR programs in Oregon, this program will be fully funded by producers of covered products under the bill. Initial DEQ outlays from "other funds" would be reimbursed by producer fees once the program is up and running.

The solid waste industry, local governments and national battery producers informed creation of HB 4144. This work also builds on the work of 14 states with similar legislation, and allows Oregon to join Florida, Iowa, Indiana, Missouri, New Hampshire and Wisconsin as they work on 2026 bills.

Thank you for joining united efforts to safeguard communities, garbage and recycling workers and infrastructure investors by reducing battery-caused fire risks by passing HB 4144.

Sincerely,

Crystal Weston
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