

Testimony against HB 4046-February 10, 2026
Before the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment

Dear Chair Lively, members of the committee, and members of the public,

My name is Sid Baum. I'm a retired middle and high school teacher, and resident of Oregon since age eight. I live with my husband on a farm southwest of Eugene, but in the 1960s to the mid-1970s, I lived in Portland as a teenager and a young adult. At that time there was a nuclear power plant being planned, then constructed, and then operated along the Columbia River, northwest of Portland. This nuclear power plant was named Trojan, an unfortunate, but fitting name, because this "gift" of power to the residents of the Portland area brought many unexpected results, all of them negative. Cost overruns, leaks, and other maintenance problems leading to frequent shutdowns continued, until the plant was finally shuttered in 1993. Portland General Electric, Trojan's two-thirds owner and 13 other northwest utilities and their ratepayers had to foot the bill.

Who will live next door to the next Trojan horse nuclear power plant? We can be sure that none of the owners or investors in the new small modular nuclear reactors would be buying homes anywhere near these plants. To paraphrase and update the warning in the Roman Poet Virgil's account of the Trojan horse in the Aeneid, "Oregonians, don't trust this horse. I'm afraid of these new nuclear proponents, even those bearing gifts." Nuclear power is not the solution to our energy needs. We have abundant, clean, efficient, and cheap solar and wind power in Oregon, out-performing anything nuclear power can provide. Battery storage technology is now available. There are also many locations in the state that are ideal for geothermal power.

There are many reasons this proposed new look at nuclear power is problematic. First is the use of private and federal money to fund a study about returning nuclear power to Oregon. The possible use of funding from the industry and its supporters risks being a clear conflict of interest and simply industry advocacy. Also, with federal nuclear safety standards being weakened, safety rules being rewritten with industry involvement, and efforts to exempt some projects from environmental review requirements, we should be very concerned about the fairness and

neutrality of this study. Why is there no comprehensive assessment of all of the renewable energy sources currently available as well?

Finally, there have been no breakthroughs that would address the requirements of the 1980 Oregon law, ORS 469.595, stating: "Before issuing a site certificate for a nuclear fueled power plant, the Energy Facility Siting Council must find that an adequate repository for the disposal of the high-level radioactive waste produced by the plant has been licensed to operate by the appropriate agency of the federal government. The repository must provide for the terminal disposition of such waste, with or without provision for retrieval for reprocessing." The new smaller nuclear reactors would still produce large amounts of nuclear waste, and be subject to accidental radiation releases at the plant sites and in transport. Hidden costs and enormous cost overruns continue to be a fact of nuclear power plant construction and operation. Why would Oregon want to re-embark on the nuclear experiment now when there are so many good alternatives? Nuclear power is still a very bad idea.

Sincerely,

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