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On Behalf Of:  
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4046

### Testimony in Opposition to Oregon House Bill 4046

Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in opposition to Oregon House Bill 4046.

My concerns are not abstract or ideological. They are grounded in the very real, unresolved problem of spent nuclear fuel and the responsibility we have to protect public safety over the long term.

At present, the only reason the United States has avoided a major radiological disaster from commercial nuclear power is that spent nuclear fuel from large reactors is kept on site in hardened dry cask storage and carefully monitored under strict security and regulatory oversight. This system works not because nuclear waste is harmless, but because it is concentrated in a relatively small number of locations, each with substantial infrastructure, trained personnel, and federal scrutiny.

Dry cask storage is not a permanent solution. It is a risk-management strategy. It depends on continuous monitoring, physical security, institutional memory, and long-term political and financial commitment. Even under these controlled conditions, spent fuel must be safeguarded for decades to centuries.

House Bill 4046 would move Oregon toward a fundamentally different and far riskier model by encouraging the deployment of many small nuclear reactors. While these reactors are often described as “advanced” or “safer,” they do not eliminate the problem of spent nuclear fuel. Each reactor—no matter how small—produces highly radioactive waste that must be isolated from people and the environment.

The result would be the creation of many more spent fuel sites across the state rather than a few heavily monitored ones. Each site would require its own security, monitoring, emergency planning, and long-term stewardship. This multiplication of waste locations dramatically increases the chances of accidents, neglect, funding shortfalls, or security breaches over time.

In this case, risk is not reduced by spreading it thinner. It is increased.

Oregon would be assuming responsibility for guarding numerous radioactive waste sites for generations, long after the companies that built the reactors may be gone. This raises serious questions about who bears liability, who pays for monitoring decades into the future, and what happens if institutional controls weaken—as history shows they often do.

It is also important to be honest about the lack of a permanent disposal solution. The United States still has no operating geological repository for commercial spent nuclear fuel. Until such a solution exists, expanding the number of waste sites is not prudent—it is reckless.

Public safety demands caution, not optimism. The current system of centralized, closely monitored dry cask storage at large reactor sites is the minimum level of control required to manage this dangerous material. House Bill 4046 would move Oregon in the opposite direction by fragmenting responsibility and multiplying long-term hazards.

Finally, I note that House Bill 4046 is introduced with an “emergency” clause. We should be deeply cautious whenever legislation invokes urgency to accelerate major, long-term decisions. High-pressure sales tactics are a familiar strategy for discouraging scrutiny, and public safety policy should never be rushed. The only real urgency appears to be financial—the desire of electricity companies and developers to access new revenue streams more quickly. Declaring an emergency does not eliminate risk; it merely shortens the time available for careful evaluation. Decisions that create radioactive waste requiring centuries of management demand deliberation, transparency, and restraint, not haste.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge you to oppose House Bill 4046 and to prioritize energy policies that do not create new, permanent radioactive waste burdens for our communities and future generations.

Thank you for your consideration.