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OREGON **rural** ACTION

SOWING SEEDS OF **CHANGE**

February 10, 2026

Chair Lively, vice chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment,

My name is Kaleb Lay and I'm director of policy & research with Oregon Rural Action. ORA is a community-led nonprofit that has worked for years with the communities affected by the pollution crises in northeast Oregon's Lower Umatilla Basin. The LUB is one of the most diverse and economically productive regions in Oregon; at the same time, it is home to a disproportionately high rate of low-income households as well as some of the state's most polluted water and air.

ORA opposes HB 4046. We appreciate the work that has been done to develop the -2 amendment; however, we remain extremely concerned about this legislation and the push to override longstanding, voter-established state law to accommodate the desires of big tech and big industry.

First and foremost, recent pro-nuclear legislation such as HB 2410 in 2025 clearly indicates that the ultimate goal of industrial interests and big tech is to fast-track development of nuclear power plants in places like the Lower Umatilla Basin in order to feed the runaway growth of data centers and heavy industry. The LUB is already home not only to the largest data center hub in Oregon, but also to some of the worst groundwater and air pollution from industrial sources in our state. We do not need to add a radioactive waste stream to the mix, especially without a designated waste repository.

The compounding pollution crises in the Lower Umatilla Basin are the result of corporate interests pursuing profit and growth at any cost, and Oregon's regulators and policymakers failing to hold them in check for decades. As is the case in all sacrifice zones, local communities are paying the price for those failures with their health, their property values, and their peace of mind.

Second, this bill would allow for the study to be privately funded, or for funding to be provided by the same federal government which is aggressively rolling back regulations and public protections around nuclear energy. Biased funders tend to fund biased studies – especially if

there's money to be made. If Oregon is going to commission a study on nuclear energy, then the results of that study must be reliable, and both the public and policymakers must be able to have confidence in its findings. Respectfully, a study commissioned in service of a seemingly predetermined outcome is neither a true study, nor is it in the public interest.

Finally, we should not need to commission a study to tell us what we already know – that nuclear energy is prohibitively expensive, is incredibly slow to build, and creates hazardous, near-unmanageable waste streams that pose serious environmental and health risks. Oregon voters have already spoken on the issue of nuclear energy, and the voters said no. We should not override that choice at the behest of big industry.

We urge you not to advance HB 4046.

Respectfully,

Kaleb Lay

Oregon Rural Action