



www.RogueClimate.org || PO Box 1980, Phoenix, OR 97535 || 541-301-9204

Coos Bay Office: 243 S. 2nd St. Coos Bay, OR 97420 || 541- 816-0758

Re: Rogue Climate Testimony regarding HB 4046

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

Rogue Climate’s mission is to empower Southern Oregon communities most impacted by climate change, including low-income, rural, youth, seniors, and communities of color, to win climate justice by organizing for clean energy, sustainable jobs, and a healthy environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on HB 4046. We appreciate being invited into the discussion to propose amendments to the study bill to ensure that it answers all the questions that Oregon community members and legislators may have, however it is still not in a place that we feel comfortable supporting due to concerns outlined below. We support the amendments including transparency around funding streams for the study as well as more well-rounded language that looks at both advantages and disadvantages of nuclear.

Our concerns about HB 4046, include: an incredibly short timeline to complete the study one year after receiving funds; funding from private interests, which could include corporations who stand to gain financially if ODOE “finds” in favor of nuclear reactor siting in Oregon (such as Amazon); and agency time spent on studying nuclear energy instead of working on implementation of realistic, affordable and reliable renewable energy pathways put forth in the [Oregon Energy Strategy](#). The study, as written, appears to be a thinly veiled one-sided mandate that risks presenting a biased view that ignores the well-documented dangers of nuclear power. In the current budget climate, Oregon needs to invest agency time and resources strategically towards proven solutions that will not further environmental injustices. HB 4046 diverts focus away from energy efficiency, renewable energy, and storage technologies that are safer, less expensive, and faster to deploy.

In 1980, Oregon voters strongly approved Measure 7, a moratorium on building nuclear reactors in Oregon until the U.S. has a national nuclear waste repository and Oregon voters approve a repeal of the moratorium. Neither of these conditions have been met to this date. We are now seeing a large push to develop in-state nuclear, a direct result of Big Tech's voracious appetite for more energy to power their AI data centers. Nuclear energy is not being proposed in our state to



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meet residential energy needs or increase resilience of our grid, it is being proposed to ensure that our state is attractive to Big Tech and other large energy users.

While no nuclear pilot projects are being proposed in Southern Oregon at this time, energy affordability is a concern that we share with communities across the state. Studies show that nuclear power is at least five times the cost of renewable energy. A [2024 ACEEE study](#) found that households that identify as low-income, African American, Latinx, or Native are more likely to be energy burdened and face a higher energy burden than the average household. Households in rural communities are also more likely to be energy burdened, with [30-39% of households](#) in Jackson and Coos county facing severe energy burdens while also earning [less than \\$15,060 per year](#). This can lead to a [crippling effect](#) on local communities and economies, since families have less disposable income to spend. Building nuclear reactors are notorious for astronomical [cost overruns](#) and delays, costs typically borne by ratepayers. Utilities should be focused on providing essential services to meet community needs, rather than using ratepayer funds to invest in dangerous, dirty, and uncertain sources of power.

Rogue Climate has been organizing with Rogue Valley and South Coast community members to ensure a just transition to renewable energy is affordable, creates good family wage jobs, and brings benefits to BIPOC, rural, and low-income communities. It is clear that Oregonians overwhelmingly want to transition away from fossil fuels and towards safer and healthier energy systems. The dollars invested in nuclear, like Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMNR), will not be available for use in building out a clean and efficient energy infrastructure. Carbon-free, low-cost technologies are ready now to accelerate the clean energy transition in the next 10+ years while SMNRs will still be looking for [licensing approval and construction funding](#). The recently published Oregon Energy Strategy outlines realistic pathways to meeting our state's increased energy demand in an efficient, affordable and equitable way. Nuclear energy is not one of those pathways. In fact, nuclear energy generated out-of-state ranked so low in efficiency and affordability that it did not even make it on to the suggestion list.

While nuclear energy does not create air pollution when operating, it creates many forms of radioactive waste that can remain radioactive and dangerous to human health for [thousands of years](#). Much of this waste is still stored temporarily across the country, with 56 million gallons at the Hanford Nuclear Reservation in Washington alone. According to the Department of Energy (DOE), about [one-third](#) of the 177 tanks at Hanford, originally designed to last for 20 years, are known to have leaked. At a time when the federal government is slashing safety and



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environmental standards for siting and building nuclear, it is even more important than ever for Oregon to safeguard its residents and environmental resources.

Finally, ODOE has already invested significant resources in exploring multiple avenues for Oregon to meet our clean energy goals and load growth demands through the [Oregon Energy Strategy](#). In every scenario, the model did not select out-of-state nuclear as a viable or cost-effective option. We learned from the OES that the cost of the energy transition will only continue to grow with further delay. HB 4046 does not support a least-cost, rapid, and equitable transition to meet Oregon's energy goals.

Oregon must focus on real solutions to the climate crisis: energy efficiency, renewables, and storage—not spending time and resources on a biased study. Please vote no on HB 4046.

Sincerely,

Jess Grady-Benson, Organizing Director
Zoe Serrano, Legislative Coordinator