

Submitter: Sarah Chaney

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Topic: OPPOSE HB 4046

Chair Lively and members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy and Environment

I am writing to oppose HB 4046.

First and foremost, we deserve unbiased studies that look at all sources of energy in tandem, and all aspects of issues surrounding energy production. This includes analysis of full life cycle production of greenhouse gasses for every energy source. We need to make sure that biases can be revealed and the public can make conclusions based on ALL the evidence. Last year HB 2038, which requested a study looking at the pros and cons of SMNRs, didn't make it to the floor for a vote. That wasn't solely because of the expense – it was also because opponents demanded a study comparing nuclear energy to all other forms of energy available.

Proponents of the bill maintain that they want to communicate up-to-date information. What has changed? Well, some countries have at times relied on renewables for 100% of their energy needs in 2025 as construction of renewable energy resources has accelerated faster than expected across the globe. And the buzz this year is investors can make an immense amount of money by investing in nuclear because there are new tax credits as well as regulatory streamlining by the NRC and the U.S. Department of Energy. However, the following information hasn't changed.

- We **still** have no federally licensed, permanent disposal facility for radioactive waste. In 1980, Oregon voters prohibited the construction of new nuclear reactors until the federal government developed a nuclear waste site. With no site in existence more than four decades later, new nuclear reactors are effectively banned within the state. Supporters of HB 4046 seem to think it's no problem to overlook this fact.
- Building new nuclear plants is **still** extremely expensive and the opportunity costs are very high. Alternatives to nuclear energy, in particular renewable low carbon sources of electricity like wind and solar energy, continue to become cheaper while nuclear energy continues to become more expensive.
- Cost and time are the two most important factors in responding to global warming. All types of nuclear projects, including SMRs, **still** fail on both counts. They are notorious for decades long delays and massive cost overruns. In the meantime, the costs of existing alternatives are getting less expensive quickly. In the small amount of time we have to stop overshooting the 1.5°C rise in global temperatures, all our resources need to be focused on the most renewable energy generated in the shortest amount of time.

“All nuclear reactors in history have taken 10 to 22 years from the planning phase to operation. Recently, the range has increased to 17 to 22 years in North America and Europe.” <https://web.stanford.edu/group/efmh/jacobson/Articles/I/24-01-MZJ-HRTtestimony.pdf>

- Full lifecycle assessment of energy generation methods **still** suggest that, from plant construction to decommissioning and the extraction and processing of the fuel, along with storage and guarding the spent fuel, while better than coal, oil and gas, nuclear is no improvement over genuine renewable sources (e.g., solar and wind) in terms of greenhouse gas emissions.
- We **still** must not lose focus on using modern technologies to meet our needs for electricity. This includes emphasizing efficiency in addition to continuing to transition to renewables.
- There **still** are no SMNRs constructed or operating in the U.S. The only project that almost made it off the starting block was NuScale’s demonstration project in Idaho that was cancelled due to skyrocketing costs and not enough commitment from utilities to buy the power that would have been produced. It would have been much more costly than power from renewables.

“According to project backers, a high-tech solution to climate change was on the horizon.... It seemed almost too good to be true. And it was. Turns out, NuScale was a house of cards. The UAMPS[the Utah Associated Municipal Power Systems] project’s price tag more than doubled and the timeline was pushed back repeatedly until it was seven years behind schedule. Finally, UAMPS saw the writing on the wall and wisely backed out in November, 2023.

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2024/10/29/the-rise-and-fall-of-nuscale-a-nuclear-cautionary-tale/>

- Initial investors in nuclear energy **still** enjoy the initial funds that come from the massive subsidies the government provides. This year, there are new tax incentives to add to the subsidies. Later, rate payers and state governments pay for the costs as projects are delayed and costs mount.

Supporters think that just because a study will be paid for with private funds, that it’s no problem to consider passing a bill to study nuclear energy separate from other energy sources. It’s part of the playbook of “securing the trust of local communities” so that investors can make a great deal of money. <https://perkinscoie.com/insights/update/nuclear-industry-kicks-2026-major-public-and-private-sector-announcements-0>

Voting HB 4046 out of committee is a disastrous signal that it is no problem to begin to undermine or counter the 1980 ballot measure precluding the construction of nuclear reactors in Oregon until a satisfactory method for disposal of the hazardous waste has been developed.

Please vote NO on HB 4046.

Thank you.