

Submitter: Emily Roper

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4046

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the committee,

I am writing to express concern regarding proposed House Bill 4046, which would assess the feasibility of constructing advanced nuclear reactors in Oregon.

I am particularly concerned about who stands to benefit from this proposed feasibility study and how the study's funding and oversight committee would be formed and held accountable. This bill should not be approved based solely on promises or "good intentions." Clear guardrails, transparency, and public accountability must be established before moving forward.

I have read extensively about the history of nuclear weapons production in the late 1940s and 1950s. Time and again, scientists and policymakers misled the public about the dangers of nuclear radiation. By the late 1940s, experts understood that radiation posed serious risks to human and ecological health, yet bomb tests continued while the public was reassured that everything was safe. That legacy of secrecy and misinformation continues to shape public distrust today.

We are still living with the political consequences of that era. Many people do not trust the government to place public health and community well-being above economic or political interests. Moving quickly into feasibility studies and testing brings more than biological and environmental risks; it risks further eroding already fragile public trust in democratic institutions.

Oregonians have by and large been clear that they do not want nuclear technologies in this state, and this bill risks undermining that long-standing public position. I am also troubled by specific language in the proposed bill. For example, it states: "The State Department of Energy shall conduct a study and make a report that addresses... the inherent safety features of advanced nuclear reactors." This phrasing is concerning. Nuclear reactors are not inherently safe; safety depends on rigorous regulation, highly skilled labor, sustained funding, and constant oversight. Language that implies otherwise diminishes the seriousness of the risks involved and does little to build public trust. This is one example of rhetoric in the bill that warrants closer scrutiny.

I am a scientist, and I value research deeply. However, more is at stake here than whether or not a study is conducted. Oregon has effectively been a nuclear-free state

since 1980. Efforts to reverse or weaken that longstanding precedent should not be rushed. Doing so could have significant political repercussions – not only for individual politicians and policymakers, but for public confidence in our political processes as a whole.

I urge you to move slowly, transparently, and with meaningful public engagement on this bill and on any future nuclear-related activities in our state.