

4315 SE 16th Ave
Portland, Oregon 97202
March 18, 2019

Ken Helm, Chair
E. Werner Reschke, Vice Chair
Sheri Schouten, Vice Chair
Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment
RE: HB 2007

Via Email

Dear Chair Helm, Vice Chairs Reschke and Schouten, and Members of the Committee:

My wife and I, nearing retirement, moved from Boston to Portland in March 2016. Over the past year, as I became more familiar with our Brooklyn neighborhood in SE Portland, I became aware of the high level of diesel pollution in Portland generally and the complete lack of official monitoring of emissions from the Union Pacific Rail Yard that our neighborhood surrounds. A thousand container trucks visit the Rail Yard daily, many of them older drayage vehicles grandfathered by EPA. Frankly, I was shocked to learn that Oregon and Portland do almost nothing to monitor emissions from the Rail Yard and other concentrations of truck traffic.

Are you aware that the Lafayette Street DEQ monitor 3 ¼ miles from my house regularly shows PM 2.5 particulates at 10 – 30 micrograms/cubic meter (with occasional peaks up to 70) which is 100 – 300 times the Oregon health benchmark for PM 2.5? DEQ gives that a bright green “Good” symbol. This morning I checked Boston’s PM 2.5 at its downtown monitoring station. The Boston reading is 3 micrograms/cubic meter.

HB 2004 is a start, too-long postponed. I am grateful for the serious attention the sponsors of this bill have given to this long-standing public health and environmental justice issue. Many Portland areas suffering from high particulate levels are along heavy routes; these neighborhoods have high rates of illness that may be caused or worsened by diesel pollution. They also tend to have higher percentages of low-income residents. Unlike higher-income residents of neighborhoods like Portland’s Pearl District where diesel pollution is also very high, many low-income and minority residents do not have the option of moving without increasing their commuting distance and housing cost.

HB 2004 is a start, but it is seriously flawed. The long phase-in period of ten years simply allows the worst-polluting older engines to age out gracefully. It also continues Oregon’s reputation as a good place to send your dirty California diesel. The transitional period should be shortened to match California’s 2023 target. Yes, I understand that compromise may be necessary, but we should not be compromising the health of our people. The ten-year transition period may result in thousands of additional deaths and much greater incidence of respiratory illness than a reasonably shorter period.

The bill appears to create a loophole for Glider Trucks, which have been free to operate in Oregon. This loophole must be closed. We already have 9,000 such deceptively sleek-bodied polluters in Oregon, concealing their dirty, largely unregulated engines.

Finally, the bill should clearly require a sticker program for all non-road diesel construction equipment so that it can be effectively regulated by cities and counties. Like trucks, equipment knows no boundaries.

I hope you and your committee will approve a stronger Clean Diesel Bill without delay.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wesley T Ward", written in a cursive style.

Wesley T Ward
4315 SE 16th Avenue
Portland, Oregon 97202