

Testimony of Peter Bergel on HB 4167

February 20, 2020

Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee:

My name is Peter Bergel. I live in Salem. I am a retired nonprofit director. I had to leave before my turn to testify today. Thank you for the work you have collectively put into bringing this bill forward.

Greta Thunberg has said about the climate crisis: “I want you to act as if your house is on fire. Because it is.” She is entirely correct.

Legislative bodies at many levels are acting as if climate change were one of the typical issues that confront elected officials, not an ongoing disaster like a house fire. Prompt and powerful action is needed to deal with an ongoing disaster. The Legislature must address climate change as it would a house afire. Time is of the essence.

Therefore, the usual process of prioritizing vested interests at worst, or even fairness at best, is not appropriate in this case. Returning to the house afire analogy, when fire engines are rushing to a fire, we demand that everyone else clear the road so the fire can take top priority. We don't say “pink Cadillacs are exempt,” or “people who know the mayor don't have to obey the law until next year,” or “people who have important appointments don't have to pull over.” Everyone must cooperate. That is what top priority means.

My message for this committee – and the Legislature as a whole – is that you must make climate change top priority. The livability of Oregon – and indeed the planet - is at stake. When you were elected to public office, protecting the public interest became your job and you swore to do it. If there are those among you who are **not** willing to do that, you are derelict in your duty and punishment for violating your oath of office is called for.

I ask that you pass a climate change bill that is at least as strong as last year's SB 2020. In addition, I ask that you spend your time focusing on the ability of the bill you pass to massively cut greenhouse gas emissions in Oregon rather than seeking ways to lessen the impact of the desperately needed changes on this group or that group. At this stage, sacrifices are our only route to survival. Have the courage to institute them.

Thank you.

Peter Bergel

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