

March 22, 2021

Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Helm, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and
Members of the House Committee on Energy & Environment

Re: House Bill (HB) 2021, 100% Clean Energy for All

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I support House HB 2021. Many Oregonians and Oregon policy experts support this bill. The climate emergencies have changed our lives and Oregon cannot wait any longer for legislative action. Further, the executive branch needs climate legislation such as HB 2021 in order to function effectively on climate.

I am retired. For over seven years I have volunteered at our *rural School District*: reading and practicing critical thinking skills with students; coaching speech and debate, and forming a nonprofit that enhances education and also operates public hours at the District's library. I have also served on the District budget committee. I have seen firsthand (1) the growing expectations from our youth that the Oregon Government needs to take bold, aggressive actions on climate and (2) the acute disbelief, followed by angst, that our youth experience from the lack of government actions on moving towards 100% clean energy.

These recent and soon to be high school graduates will benefit the most from HB 2021 and its unequivocal policy of transitioning to clean energy. This is true on several fronts: economic benefits of jobs in and related to the clean energy industry, health benefits of reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and increased safety and security by stemming droughts, floods, crop damages and fires directly resulting from the GHG emissions and climate crisis.

Since 2011, when high public support in Oregon for climate actions was documented by the Oregon Global Warming Commission (GWC), the Legislature has delayed taking the actions necessary to reduce GHG emissions. Emissions have increased, not decreased. Oregon missed the statutory 2020 GHG reduction goal, having not adopted critical recommendations from the GWC's legislative reports dated 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017, 2018 and now 2020.

Hence the September 2020 climate fires did not surprise many Oregonians. We saw the writing on the wall from the news, the climate experts, including those at Oregon State, and the climate activists. For us, from a neighbor who moved here after losing their home to the 2017 climate fire in Paradise, CA.

The escalating climate emergencies in Oregon have overtaken the government's mistakes on climate: thousands lost their homes and/or businesses to the September fires and thousands more evacuated. We were evacuated for twelve days. Our rural fire district's chief concluded that if the high winds had continued for just one more hour, our entire neighborhood would have burned to the ground. Even as our structures survived, my neighbors and I, young and old, suffered the trauma of being displaced. We have damages and scars -- mental, health and financial -- from displacement, fear, ash, smoke, lack of electricity and internet, abandoned or relocated livestock, and spoiled food. These climate emergencies impact Oregonians irrespective of political party or beliefs.

So, for me and many others, the need for action can no longer be kicked down the road. Most Oregonians support action now. That number is growing.

Importantly, the executive branch needs the Legislature's leadership that passing HB 2021 would provide. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) believes it does not have the authority to regulate GHG emissions from the burning of fossil fuels for electricity. The staff, however, know that this decision is not based on science or need. It is based on the lack of legislative action and the fear of industry lawsuits. Moreover, as every legislator knows, the steps the executive branch is taking under Executive Order 20-04 will take 3-15 years to result in actual reductions in GHG emissions. This is ineffective.

Without legislative support, DEQ and the other 15 agencies with EO 20-04 mandates are too timid. Their actions will not reduce GHG emissions to meet the goals. They know that what they are doing is not enough. They are looking to you for support -- new climate laws such as HB 2021.

We all know that with political will, our government can act boldly and rapidly. We all know that the legislature cannot continue to delay. The consequences are clearly too high for everyone. Moreover, the costs of "adapting" to the climate changes are increasing, unchecked without GHG reductions. Plus, HB 2021 will smooth the transition to clean energy; the only path that gives us hope and opportunities, especially for our youth.

I urge you all to support HB 2021 with strong standards for clean energy transition -- and pass this bill soon -- time is of the essence.

Sincerely,

Helen Kennedy
Marcola, Oregon
Advocate for bold, rapid actions on Climate

Attachment -- Excerpt from GWC Recommendation #25 in its 2020 legislative report

25. Mandate that 100 percent of the state's electricity come from clean (zero emitting) energy sources by 2040.

There is growing interest in transforming electrical generation to be from 100 percent zero-carbon dioxide emitting sources of energy. Since 2018, California, Colorado, Maine, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, Puerto Rico, and Washington legislatures have all passed bills aimed at making their state's electricity sector carbon free by 2045-2050, and the incoming Biden administration has identified 2035 as its target for eliminating emissions from the electric sector. Setting Oregon's sights on a 100 percent zero-carbon goal for 2040 provides the right level of long-term ambition.