

Board of County Commissioners Multnomah County

February 15, 2022

Joint Committee on Transportation
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Re: Multnomah County Supports HB 4141

Co-Chairs Beyer and McLain, and Members of the Committee:

Multnomah County recognizes both the importance of diesel engines to Oregon's economy, and the significant risk that diesel pollution poses to the health and well-being of our community and our environment. This is why we strongly support the adoption of HB 4141, a prudent approach to reducing carbon emissions and improving air quality that protects Oregon's economic vitality.

Multnomah County is committed to a just energy transition away from fossil fuels and has set a goal for our community to be powered by 100% renewable sources of energy by 2050. Electrification of the transportation sector, the County's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, is a key strategy to achieve this goal. However, electrification will take time, particularly for those parts of our economy that are energy intensive like the operation of diesel engines. Fortunately, renewable diesel offers a drop-in replacement for fossil diesel fuel that is 60% less carbon intensive. Diesel fuel combustion represents 14% of the total greenhouse gas emissions generated in Multnomah County, and the adoption and implementation of HB 4141 would represent a significant step toward achieving our renewable energy and carbon emissions goals.

While the past two years of heat waves and wildfire smoke have clearly demonstrated the risk that climate change poses to our community, the immediate impacts from fossil fuel combustion to the health of our community cannot be overstated. Multnomah County has the highest exposure rate to diesel exhaust in Oregon and is in the 95th percentile nationally for exposure to diesel particulate matter (PM) according to Environmental Protection Agency's National Air Toxics Assessment data. Exposure to diesel engine exhaust can cause cancer, increases the risk of heart attack, stroke, and cardiovascular disease, exacerbates asthma and can lead to low-weight and preterm births.¹ Children are especially vulnerable because their lungs are still in the developmental phase and they breathe, on average, 50 percent more air per pound of body

¹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (2002) Health Assessment Document for Diesel Engine Exhaust. Washington, DC: National Center for Environmental Assessment, Office of Research and Development

weight than adults. There is a growing body of evidence linking traffic-related air pollution, including diesel exhaust, to neurodevelopmental disorders like Autism Spectrum Disorder.²

All Multnomah County residents are exposed to a dangerous level of diesel pollution. However, in some areas like near transportation corridors or rail yards, levels of diesel pollution are over 10 times health benchmarks.³ In 2014 the Multnomah County Health Department conducted a study of racial and ethnic health disparities that showed areas of the County with the highest proportion of Black or Latinx individuals were exposed to 3 or 2.5 times the amount of diesel PM, respectively. In addition, researchers have found that Black Oregonians are exposed to nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), another toxic byproduct of diesel combustion, at concentrations about 40% higher than those experienced by white Oregonians. The areas of the state with the highest concentrations of mobile source-related cancer risk, including Multnomah County, are home to 40% of the state's Black population, but just 18% of the non-Hispanic white population.⁴

Multnomah County has been a strong advocate for efforts at the state, regional and local levels to address these air quality and health equity concerns head on. This includes supporting the adoption of HB 2007 and participating on the Task Force on Supporting Businesses in Reducing Diesel Emissions, which included among its recommendations an expansion of the use of renewable diesel. Multnomah County has also been a leader in the adoption of regional clean diesel contracting standards for public agencies to address the operation of highly polluting legacy diesel equipment. HB 4141 is an important complementary policy to these and other efforts, and presents an immediate opportunity to reduce PM by 30% and nitrogen oxides (including NO₂) by 10% from fossil diesel exhaust.⁵ These reductions and those achieved by the complementary programs mentioned will have a significant positive impact on the health of our community.

Finally, Multnomah County is confident that our community can make this transition because we have already begun to make the switch to renewable diesel in our own operations. All of the County's primary fleet fueling sites have already transitioned to renewable diesel with no detrimental impact to the County's operations. We are eager to see the non-retail vendors that the County uses also offer renewable diesel and this bill will provide the impetus for them to do so.

² Roberts, Andrea L., et al. "Perinatal Air Pollutant Exposures and Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Children of Nurses' Health Study II Participants." *Environmental Health Perspectives*. vol 121, no 8 (2013): 978-984

³ Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. *Portland Area Pollutant Summary Sheet/Maps for Air Toxics*. Portland 2012.

⁴ Clark, Lara P., et al. "Changes in Transportation-Related Air Pollution Exposures by Race-Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: Outdoor Nitrogen Dioxide in the United States in 2000 and 2010." *Environmental Health Perspectives*. vol 125, no 9, Sept. 2017.

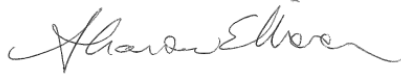
⁵ California Environmental Protection Agency. Staff Report: Multimedia Evaluation of Renewable Diesel, May 2015, II.a.1, page 8.

We urge you to support HB 4141 and are eager to work with the Legislature and other stakeholders on its implementation.

Sincerely,



Deborah Kafoury
Multnomah County Chair



Sharon Meieran
District 1 Commissioner



Susheela Jayapal
District 2 Commissioner



Jessica Vega Pederson
District 3 Commissioner



Lori Stegmann
District 4 Commissioner