

February 16, 2023

Oregon State Legislature  
Legislative information section.

Dear Chair and Committee members,

I am writing to you today to express my support for HB 2601 which requires the Oregon Treasury to divest from fossil fuel. As a climate activist and a resident of the state of Oregon, I am deeply concerned about the devastating effects of climate change on our environment and communities. We are experiencing increased heat waves, wildfires, biodiversity loss, disease burdens, human displacements, and other disasters causing major disruption to our society, economy, and environment.

Fossil fuels are a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions causing climate change. Oil and gas also play a major role in polluting our water, ocean, and air. Air pollution particularly affects communities of color and low-income groups. Plenty of evidence shows Black and Brown people breathe-in the most toxic air in the United States than any other group. We are more likely to suffer from respiratory illnesses and are at greater risk of premature death from fine particulate matter. As a person of color, I see continued investment in fossil fuel not just as a climate problem but as a racial and social justice issue.

Furthermore, divestment from fossil fuels makes economic sense. As the global shift towards clean energy continues to accelerate, fossil fuel investments are becoming more volatile, riskier, and less profitable. If the State of Oregon cares about our planet and the people living on it, we must divest from fossil fuels. By divesting from fossil fuels, Oregon will reduce its contributions to global warming, protect our environment, reduce financial exposure to risky investments, and support our public health and social justice goals. This will also send a strong message to other states in the country that Oregon is committed to taking meaningful action to address climate change.

We cannot let the fear of the unknown hold us back; rather we must seize the opportunity to transition to a clean, more sustainable and prosperous future. It is clear that we need to decarbonize our economy, scale up solutions to climate change, expand our zero-emission zones, and prioritize investments in cleaner and renewable energy resources that will provide new jobs for communities.

I urge you today to pass HB 2601. By doing so, Oregon will align its financial interests with its environmental, health, and social values. You will not only help protect our planet and its inhabitants, you will also set Oregonians on a pathway towards a just, sustainable and prosperous future.

Thank you for your attention and urgent action on this important matter.

Jola Ajibade  
Associate Professor of Geography  
Portland State University