



TO: Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and Committee Members
FR: Alyssa Rueda, Environmental Justice Projects Assistant, Beyond Toxics
Meet Panchal, Statewide Environmental Justice Project Manager, Beyond Toxics
DT: February 16, 2023

RE: Testimony to the House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans in Support of HB 2601

Dear Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and Committee Members,

On behalf of Beyond Toxics, a state-wide environmental justice nonprofit, and thousands of our supporters across the state, we are writing to express our strong support of HB 2601—a necessary bill that establishes the Treasury Investment & Climate Protection Act. Beyond Toxics has been an active public interest participant in policy decisions related to public health for over twenty years, and our organization emphasizes environmental justice and community engagement. We are leaders in the climate justice space and strongly believe in a just transition away from a fossil fuel economy. HB 2601 is a necessary step in decoupling our state’s funding from certain carbon-intensive investments and a bold step forward in climate action.

Beyond Toxics strongly supports HB 2601 because Oregon must act now and take strong action to fight the climate crisis. Fossil fuel dependency and infrastructure are leading drivers in the climate crisis that Oregon is already experiencing. From drought and water insecurity to increasingly devastating climate-fueled wildfires, Oregon and its residents are facing devastating impacts *now*. Communities across the state must grapple with the reality of a changing climate, and our state’s infrastructure is not immune to climate risks. Investing in a fossil fuel future invests in a future where we accept the consequences while knowing the risks. No one is safe from the risks associated with the changing climate, and all of these risks come with a human cost as well as a financial cost.

There are sound fiscal alternatives consistent with moving towards clean energy. The Legislature must play its part in mandating a transition towards clean energy because the Treasury does not have the urgency and has not been transparent about the risks to the portfolio. Transparent public policy is essential to a thriving democracy and citizen empowerment. The Treasury’s own *Climate Risk Scenario Modelling Report* of February 2022 counsels that holding onto PERS public equity fossil fuel investments is a big financial loser. The Treasury's response was to make half a billion of NEW investments in fossil fuels in January 2023. Financial urgency and risk of the climate crisis on PERS requires no new fossil fuel investments and a phased exit from existing holdings. Oregon can create better certainty for PERS through policies that acknowledge

the decline of value in fossil-fuel investments. As stated by the International Energy Agency, “If governments are serious about the climate crisis, there can be no new investments in oil, gas and coal, from now – from this year.”

Oregon is a leader in legislation to move the state to a green future; the Treasury must stop undermining that legislation by funding fossil fuels. HB 2601 protects Oregonians’ public pensions and our environment and is thus a win-win for Oregon. Healthy communities, a thriving climate, and sound investments do not have to be mutually exclusive

Thank you for your consideration and please support HB 2601.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Rueda
Environmental Justice Projects Assistant
arueda@beyondtoxics.org

Meet Panchal
Statewide Environmental Justice Projects Manger
mpanchal@beyondtoxics.org