



TO: Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis and Tran, and Committee Members

FR: Lisa Arkin Executive Director, Beyond Toxics

DT: February 6, 2024

RE: Testimony to the House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans in Support of HB 4044

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 4044—a necessary bill that provides a pathway for the Oregon DEQ to study risks and issues related to earthquake-induced toxic inhalation. Beyond Toxics has been an active public interest participant in policy decisions related to toxics exposures and public health for over twenty years, and our organization emphasizes environmental justice and public health.

Beyond Toxics strongly supports HB 4044 because Oregon must act now to study the risks and propose effective mitigating actions to address the real and present threat of chemical exposures and toxic inhalations caused by the failure of fossil fuel infrastructure during a seismic event. The existence of old and decaying fossil fuel tanks and other infrastructure erected on unstable soils in Multnomah County is well documented. Other communities are also home to aging oil tanks and pipelines such as the Kinder Morgan tank farm in Northwest Eugene. That is why we support the statewide focus detailed in Section 1C, that requires the agency to report on the statewide number of facilities of concern. The risks of a chemical release associated with earthquake vulnerability could be catastrophic; these risks come with a human cost as well as a financial cost.

HB 4044 will provide reliable data and a sound scientific approach that will ultimately protect Oregonians' health and our environment in the case of a disaster involving highly hazardous chemicals. Disaster preparedness achieved through science and research will result in sound investments that protect nearby residential communities and our first responders. Thank you for your consideration and please support HB 4044.

Sincerely,

Lisa Arkin, Executive Director, Beyond Toxics