

Submitter: Alyssa Koomas

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General  
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB4083

Thank you for the opportunity to comment in support of HB 4083.

I am a public health professional and a mother of two young children in Portland, Oregon. The public's health and wellbeing is the focus of my career and I am especially concerned about the environmental legacy we are leaving our children. Coal is damaging to the environment, climate, and public health causing damage to air, soil, and waterways and human health impacts such as cancer, cardiovascular disease, respiratory disease, kidney disease, mental health problems, adverse birth outcomes, impaired child development, and others, and coal across the use continuum impacts vulnerable populations disproportionately.

I strongly support HB 4083 — the COAL Act — because I think it's critically important that we protect the fiscal viability of Oregon's investments while achieving our climate goals. More than 400,000 Oregonians are PERS members. They and their families depend on their pensions. But their pensions are at risk when the Treasury invests in coal, which is not a good investment for the long term. Since California began removing coal from its CalPERS portfolio, it has gained an estimated \$598 million in returns. Oregon, on the other hand, has foregone \$340 million in returns, according to an analysis by Divest Oregon. As the former Deputy Comptroller of New York State said, "Divestment is a defensive tool employed to protect investors from the loss of value – losses as certain as climate change's global reach."

We need the Oregon Treasury to protect PERS and the rest of the Treasury's investments as we transition towards a green economy and I believe this bill is a small step forward. HB 4083 is right-sized for the short session: the provisions of the act are specific, achievable and measurable.

Please vote the COAL Act out of committee. Thank you for your support of HB 4083. Oregon needs to be a leader.

Sincerely,  
Alyssa Koomas