



# American Association of University Professors

*Academic Freedom for a Free Society*

Representative Grayber, Chair  
Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans  
Oregon State Capitol  
Salem, OR 97301

February 8, 2024

Re: House Bill 4083 - Support

Chair Grayber, Vice-Chairs Lewis, Tran, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 6,300 members of the American Association of University Professors in Oregon, our collective bargaining chapters at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, Oregon State University, and Oregon Institute of Technology, and our faculty members in advocacy chapters across Oregon, we urge you to support HB 4083.

As we can clearly see with each passing year, climate change is no longer a matter of if, but rather of when. In the face of this imminent crisis, divestment from the waning coal industry is an investment in the financial and physical safety of our members, their families, and their communities.

We can no longer afford to pretend that our old investment strategies will continue to perform reliably while both the coal industry and the climate in general continue to degrade. An increasing number of financial institutions are exiting from coal to avoid stranded assets, so the longer our PERS dollars are invested in this toxic industry, the greater the financial risk to the retirement funds of our members. Reducing risk is a key goal of responsible financial management, and according to an analysis by Divest Oregon, Oregon's coal investments underperformed by \$340 million in the past 7.5 years. These investments have already begun to fail, so the time is now for our state to change course and protect the retirement savings our members have worked so hard to accrue.

Furthermore, by divesting from the coal industry, we can support the transition to a more just and livable future. A healthy retirement savings means next to nothing if we do not have a healthy climate in which to enjoy retirement. The continued use of polluting energy sources is driving the dangerous and deadly impacts of climate change, such as increased frequency and severity of natural disasters, loss of biodiversity, and harm to public health. Therefore, investments in

almost any other profitable enterprise would better serve this and future generations of Oregonians.

Because of these dangers, both fiscal and physical, we strongly urge you to support HB 4083 and take a step towards a more sustainable and responsible investment future for the people of Oregon.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Victor Reyes  
Executive Director, AAUP Oregon