

February 8, 2024

Chair Grayber, Vice Chairs Lewis and Tran, and members of the committee.

My name is Chloë Hughes. I am a vice president of AFT-Oregon's Executive Council, and I serve as the Treasurer of my Local, Western Oregon University Federation of Teachers. I have been a teacher or teacher educator for over 30 years and entered public service because I care about the wellbeing and education of young people. I want to leave a legacy when I retire – a healthy, well-informed, and resilient Oregon.

Educators cannot ignore the fact that climate change poses a dire threat to our students' welfare. To us, that would be as irresponsible as our disregarding the reality of the opioid crisis that now plagues our nation.

Now Imagine for a moment (--I know this may seem a little hyperbolic) that PERS were as invested in illegal fentanyl production as it currently is in fossil fuels. Would anyone suggest waiting till 2050 to make PERS fentanyl-neutral? According to the CDC¹ in 2022, almost 75,000 people died from fentanyl overdose in the US. It's a devastating number, but according to a Harvard University study², the burning of fossil fuels has led to almost 5 times as many premature deaths (350,000) in the US, in 2019 alone.

Climate change has also had an impact on Oregon's investments and is cause for serious concern. For coal, the warning signs are clear: it is an industry in decline and the risk of stranded assets means it is a bad investment for the long term. Continuing to invest in coal puts our pensions at risk.

The COAL Act honors the work of Oregon's public employees by protecting both their retirement security and the health of their communities.

I urge you to support HB 4083. Thank you.

Chloë Hughes

Professor of Teacher Education

¹ Source: [Centers for Disease Control. Data from 2022](#)

² K. Vohra *et al.* (2021). [Global mortality from outdoor fine particle pollution generated by fossil fuel combustion: results from GEOS-Chem](#). *Environmental Research*, Volume 195