



<https://www.coinoregon.org/>

COINLeadership@gmail.com

February 16, 2024

Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Levy, and the other members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, and the Environment,

I'm writing today on behalf of Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN), its Legislative Team, and its Climate, Energy, and Environment Team to express our support for HB 4112, the Clean Technology Leadership bill, and the -3 amendment. COIN is a coalition of nearly 50 Indivisible groups located throughout the state of Oregon, including some of its most rural counties, that cooperate and amplify their joint efforts to advance federal and state legislation and hold their elected representatives accountable.

In addition to serving as the co-chair of COIN's Climate, Energy, and Environment Team and member of its Legislative Team, I am a retired professor of energy policy. I taught graduate and professional development courses on national and regional energy policy at one of Oregon's public universities for almost 30 years, and I still serve as the chair of the advisory committee for Portland State University's Graduate Certificate Program in Energy Policy and Management. I have also provided internal professional development training sessions on issues related to Northwest energy policy to many of the major players in the region's energy community, including the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), the state energy offices in Oregon and Washington, several of the region's largest electric utilities, the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, the Energy Trust of Oregon, and others. I have also taught continuing legal education courses at some of the region's major law firms that have a major energy law practice. As a result, while I am not presenting testimony on behalf of Portland State University or any other Oregon educational institution, our comments are informed by these experiences.

This is so much to like about HB 4112 and its -3 amendment. COIN supported the 2023 version of this bill (HB 3579) and we think this year's version is even better. I have listened to the testimony presented during the hearings and read all the available testimony. There are already many excellent statements that explain why this legislation can help Oregon become a regional leader in clean technology manufacturing, so there is no need to repeat them here. I will simply add that I had the honor of serving on the team that helped to develop some of the concepts included in the Inflation Reduction Act. I want to reinforce the statement from the key staff members from the Oregon Environmental Council and Climate Solutions: The Inflation Reduction Act includes about \$60 billion in tax credits, direct loans, and grants for domestic manufacturing across the clean energy supply chain. They correctly note that companies based in other states and abroad are "seeking to harness these incentives to expand or establish their clean technology businesses and manufacturing facilities across the United States." We want to make sure that Oregon, a state that has such an impressive reputation and track record for

innovation, collaboration, and commitment to a clean and just energy future, earns its fair share of these funds.

With the help of this legislation, Oregon companies and supporting organization will be well-positioned to secure at least \$768 million in federal IRA investments. In fact, as Tim Miller, director of Oregon Business for Climate, pointed out in his oral testimony, the \$768 million number is simply an estimate based on Oregon's population compared to those of other states. Given Oregon's long-standing leadership and commitment to a clean energy economy, it is likely that we can do even better with the support of this programs established under this bill.

We agree that this legislation will promote high skilled manufacturing jobs with the help of the procurement preference provisions and the Clean Tech Opportunity Fund. We support the bill's thoughtful workforce standards evaluation criteria, and we are pleased to see that this session's version of the bill emphasizes the creation of a statewide advisory council within the Governor's office to identify additional, strategic policy mechanisms and tools that will further support clean technology manufacturing Oregon.

When COIN testified in favor of last session's edition of this bill, we offered a suggestion for an enhanced workforce development component to further strengthen the bill. Unfortunately, this suggestion was not picked up in this session's version of the bill and we were not invited to participate in any discussions leading to the development of HB 4112. Most likely, it is too late to make additional modifications to the bill during this short session. However, we hope the advisory council and the state legislature will consider our suggestion for future legislation. For now, I will simply "cut and paste" below and *place in italics* this portion of COIN'S testimony on the 2023 version of the bill.

Workforce Development:

The appears to be little thought in the bill toward workforce development. An educated, nimble, and flexible workforce will be key to the success of this program. Most people already working in this field are nearing retirement age. Training programs need to be developed and expanded dramatically at the high school, community college, undergraduate, and graduate levels.

Most people already working in this field are nearing retirement age. Leaders in the clean energy industry have urged state universities and community colleges to "up their game", but these public institutions are in terrible financial shape due to the pandemic and dwindling attendance. Rather than creating vitally needed new positions, Oregon universities currently have no choice but to reduce their budgets dramatically.

For example, for many years, the graduate level power engineering programs in our region were designed primarily to support the development of nuclear power plants, fossil fuel plants, and, in the Northwest, hydroelectric dams. Some significant progress has been made in recent years to begin the critical transition to a workforce that is appropriate for a clean energy economy, but so much more needs to be done. Community colleges and universities have proposed

excellent ideas for new workforce development programs, but funds are not available to implement them.

Not too many decades ago, universities in Oregon would receive about 80% of their funding from the state with most of the remainder coming from student tuition. According to the recently released [State Higher Education Finance Report](#), student tuition dollars now provide more than half (54%) of revenue at Oregon's public colleges and universities. While this is better than the 64% share that student tuition dollars contributed in 2015, it is far behind our neighboring states and most of the rest of the country. Only 35% of Washington's higher education revenue and 20% of California's revenue come from student tuition.

Oregon also comes up short when it comes to providing state financial aid for students. Financial aid allocations in 2021 amounted to \$574 per full-time student, compared to the national average of \$921, according to the report. Washington allocated more than three times as much as Oregon in financial aid per full-time student, at over \$1,900 in 2021.

Not surprisingly, student enrollment is way down among community colleges and universities and these institutions are facing what experts call a [financial cliff](#), with depleted enrollment and uncertain state funding. Given this funding crisis, it is essentially impossible for community colleges and universities to offer new and expanded education and workforce development to prepare students to become productive future employees of clean energy technology companies and manufacturers in Oregon. State and federal support will be essential.

We know it is possible to secure government support for this sort of effort if government leaders like you and others decide give workforce development the attention it deserves. Why do we know this? Because back in 2009 some COIN members played a major role in securing support from all four Northwest governors, all eight Northwest Senators, and all but one Northwest Representative (only because he was in the hospital) when we created two closely related regional applications that led to the creation of the Pacific Northwest Center of Excellence for Clean Energy through a Department of Energy Recovery Act Workforce Training for the Electric Power Sector Funding Opportunity. These letters of support are available upon request. The result was \$12 million in federal funds to help community colleges and universities in our region dramatically revamp their curricula to address the new clean energy economy workforce development needs associated with a clean and just energy economy. We made great strides over the three-year period of this grant, but it is not easy to "turn a battleship around" as quickly as we would have liked. We are confident that our effort would have received additional federal support had it not been for the election of a new President who was less interested in a clean and just energy economy. As a result, federal funding dried up. With the passage of IRA and related legislation significant new funding opportunities have emerged. We should take advantage of them. We were hopeful that the clean energy workforce development issues would be addressed in expanded version of HB 3518, co-sponsored by Representatives Rayfield and Noose, that would have focused specifically on workforce development in the clear

energy sector. After all, HB 3579 already has a “heavy load” to carry. However, HB 3518 did not receive a hearing, so the options are limited.

At the very least we recommend that the Task Force established by the bill include an instructor from the one of the community colleges that are preparing future employees for the clean energy jobs, and an instructor from one of the state university power engineering or related programs that are preparing future employees with more advanced skills.

Respectfully,

Jeff Hammarlund, on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network,
COIN’s Legislative Team, and COIN’s Climate Energy and Environment Team

