

Testimony SB 685

TO: Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and members Golden, Pham, and Robinson

FR: Eric Richardson

DT: 2/14/25

RE: Testimony in Support of SB 685 To Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Chair Sollman, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, and members Golden, Pham, and Robinson,

My name is Eric Richardson, I am here today representing BeyondToxics as one of their Environmental Justice Organizers. As an organization dedicated to firm support of innovation and growth I would like to add our support to SB 685. As an Environmental Justice Organizer it is my role to listen to the concerns coming from the community and place their families health and wellbeing as the guiding star for our work.

Understanding the potential to repeat harmful practices of the past that put people of color and low income communities at risk we are advocating for policies that will avoid unequal and unjust impacts of environmental pollution, and toxic exposure in our most vulnerable communities.

Our community was activated when they learned that Northwest Natural had submitted a proposal to start a hydrogen blending pilot project in West Eugene. The corporation also was in the process of signing contracts with our public utility, the Eugene Water and Electric Board, to purchase large quantities of Eugene's water to run the hydrogen plant.

There was no transparency and no effort to inform residents about the pilot project. It took public record requests, a community-wide petition and working with national and state nonprofits to file for intervenor status with the Public Utility Commission. NWN did finally pull the plug on their West Eugene project.

Going forward families are rightly concerned that without regulation corporations are basically allowed to experiment with private lives, homes, health and safety.

SB685 speaks to many common sense measures that seek to protect our communities:

- Allow the community to be given mandatory prior notice.
- Help establish safety standards, pipeline integrity, leak detection, emergency response.
- Evaluate risks from hydrogen leaks, combustion in homes and buildings, and environmental degradation.
- Enhance public health and safety by robust community engagement thus creating transparency in decisions that impact their lives.

On behalf of previously impacted communities we ask that you support SB 685.

Thank you-

Eric Richardson. ECJ organizer/Beyond Toxics

Testimony SB 685