

Submitter: Ann Turner
On Behalf Of: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB685

Date: February 12, 2025

To: Senate Committee on Energy, and Environment Subject: Support SB 685
Hydrogen Blending Oversight and Public Notice

Dear Chair Sollman, Vice–Chair Brock Smith, and Members of the Senate
Committee on Energy and Environment,

I strongly support SB 685, requiring that gas utilities notify the Public Utility
Commission of its plans to blend hydrogen into the methane that it delivers.

I am the Co-President of the Board of Directors for Oregon Physicians for Social
Responsibility (OPSR) and a member of OPSR’s Healthy Climate Action Team. As
a retired primary care physician working with underserved populations at Virginia
Garcia Memorial Health Center, I am passionate about the disproportionate effect
climate change will have on frontline communities.

You might ask what this has to do with Hydrogen blending by gas utilities. Gas
utilities in Oregon insist that blending hydrogen with methane will significantly reduce
its emissions. This is a false promise. Remember the Hindenburg! Even if green
hydrogen is used, the maximum climate benefit from hydrogen blending into natural
gas pipelines is 7%. The cost of producing green hydrogen is enormous. It is difficult
to believe that the gas utilities believe this to be a solution since NW Natural was
among the companies that tried to block the State’s Climate Protection Program. We
are in the midst of a climate crisis, climate chaos. Every day we hear about yet
another devastating “natural” disaster that is the result of our warmer planet. January
2025 has been the hottest January on record ever.

NW Natural is using rate-payer money to conduct experimental blending of hydrogen
without letting rate-payers know they are doing it. This is unconscionable. The
Public Utility Commission should be in charge of this. The PUC should evaluate the
addition of hydrogen by utilities to determine its safety and require the utility to inform
its customers of this and any associated risks.

Blending hydrogen adds both safety and health risks:

- It degrades pipelines, making them likely to leak or explode.
- Medical experts have warned that hydrogen blending could increase in-home emissions of nitrogen oxide, which is a potent cause of asthma in kids and other respiratory disorders.
- Blends above 5% hydrogen increase safety risks from leaks, embrittlement of gas infrastructure, and malfunctions in household appliances like gas stoves and heaters.

I, therefore, strongly urge you to support SB 685 to require transparency by gas
utilities. This is the least we can do. We must stop using fossil fuels entirely. If we
can’t do that we can at least call out these companies’ “green-washing” attempts to

convince the public that they can meaningfully reduce emissions while at the same time , they are raising ratepayer rates to cover the cost of this subterfuge.

Respectfully,

Ann Turner, MD

Portland, OR 97211