

Submitter: Katherine Voorhees  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB685  
Date: February XX, 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,

My name is Katherine Michaela Voorhees and I live in Portland, OR. Oregon's current regulatory framework lacks sufficient oversight and notice requirements for blending hydrogen into natural gas residential home pipelines. This regulatory gap poses significant risks for ratepayers, public safety, and environmental health. This is why I support SB 685 to provide hydrogen blending oversight and public notice.

As a resident of southeast Portland I am very worried about the safety and health risks that hydrogen blending poses to me and my neighbors. While I have lived in Portland for most of past 15 years, I returned to my hometown of Andover, MA to live with my parents temporarily in 2018 while I was recovering for surgery. In September, I was in my childhood home with my mother when we noticed a firetruck park in front of the apartment building two door down. Shortly after a police officer asked us to leave our house. We left, thinking that we would likely be able to return after dinner, only to learn that numerous fire and gas explosion were affecting homes throughout our neighborhood and in the neighboring towns of Lawrence and North Andover. We were not allowed to return home for several days. When we did gas remained shut off and my parents were without hot water until December, 3 months after the event. It wasn't until later that we learned all this had been caused by an error the gas company made while replacing some old piping, leading to excessive pressure build-up in the gas pipes. This lead to a huge amount of damage to people's homes, several injuries, and the death of one young man, Leonel Rondon who was killed by a falling chimney he attempted to evacuate.

Small mistakes when working with natural gas can have deadly consequences. Had the gas that built up been blended with hydrogen this already catastrophic event could have been even more deadly. We know that hydrogen ignite more easily and that higher hydrogen blends can damage pipelines and appliances further increasing the risk of gas leaks or explosions. Informing neighbors of new practices that can lead to greater risks is the very minimum that should be required of gas companies. Investing in hydrogen blending increases our dependence of fossil fuels and a time climate action is critical. The minimal reduction in carbon emissions expected for

high-risk high hydrogen blends does little to move us in the right direction, when focusing on electrification and renewable energy sources are necessary for addressing the climate crisis.

I strongly urge you to support SB 685.

Sincerely,

Katherine Michaela Voorhees