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Remote Testimony Before the House Climate Energy and Environment Committee
House Bill 2410
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Chair Lively and Members of the House Climate, Energy and Environment Committee.

For the record, my name is Hayden Forster. I grew up in Silverton and am currently a fourth-year student at Oregon State University, studying Nuclear Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Spanish. I am a Catalyst Scholar, Ford Scholar, serve on the Engineering Student Council, and represent Nuclear Science and Engineering as a Senator.

I am here today as a student and future engineer to encourage passage of HB 2410 that provides an exemption from Oregon's restrictions on nuclear energy, specifically, to allow for a small modular reactor (SMR) demonstration project to be sited in Umatilla County. There are three key reasons why I believe this exemption is critical for Oregon's energy future:

1. Investment into Higher Education:

Oregon State University is a nationally recognized leader in engineering and nuclear research, with faculty and students contributing to the advancement of small modular reactor technology and nuclear innovation. Allowing an SMR demonstration project in Umatilla County would provide hands-on research opportunities, attract federal and private funding, and strengthen partnerships with industry leaders. Such an investment would not only enhance OSU's reputation but also create a pipeline of highly skilled graduates prepared to lead Oregon's transition to clean, advanced energy. Oregon has the opportunity to become a hub for SMR development, drawing in talent, research dollars, and economic growth, while ensuring our state remains at the forefront of clean energy technology.

2. Reliable, carbon-free, energy independence for a tech driven future:

Oregon has ambitious goals for technology growth, industries require vast amounts of reliable electricity and grid stability to succeed. Without investment in local clean energy sources, we risk becoming dependent on imported power, which can be costly and unreliable.

3. Retaining Oregon's Talent and Innovation:

Oregon and Oregon State University is home to world-leading experts in small modular reactor technology. The state has invested heavily in this talent pipeline through education and research funding. If we do not create opportunities for advanced nuclear projects here, we will be exporting our expertise and workforce to other states and nations that are moving forward with this technology.

I urge the committee to consider this exemption as a step toward a cleaner, abundantly talented, and energy-independent Oregon. Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions