

Submitter: Andy Harris  
On Behalf Of: Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility  
Committee: House Committee On Climate, Energy, and Environment  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2038

Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Levy, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Dr Andy Harris. I am speaking on behalf of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility in opposition to HB 2038.

This bill makes no pretense of being fair-minded and balanced. It requires the OR Dept of Energy to study just the advantages of nuclear energy, but not its disadvantages! This is absurd, blatantly biased, and unscientific - a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Nuclear power depends on mining and milling uranium that is usually done on Indigenous lands, exposing workers and communities downwind to ionizing radiation. Among the multiple risks are cancer, birth defects, damaged DNA, leukemia, cardiovascular disease, cataracts, and thyroid disease.

Nuclear reactors, including SMRs, use a process of nuclear fission, and all produce radioactive waste. The isotopes can remain radioactive for tens of thousands of years.

A permanent repository for nuclear waste does not exist in the U.S. Instead, nuclear waste is generally stored in cooling ponds adjacent to reactor sites. Although the ponds are encased in concrete, they can be a target for terrorists using drones.

What nuclear energy proponents fail to mention is that a large expenditure of fossil fuels are necessary for uranium mining, for site prep and construction of reactors, as well as transportation of equipment and fuel to the reactor site. All of these activities add to the release of greenhouse gases and exacerbate climate change, resulting in wildfires, heat domes, severe storms, flooding, droughts, rising sea levels, etc.

Finally, nuclear reactors are at risk of malfunction and radiation leaks, which may lead to meltdowns and disasters, such as at Three Mile Island (1979), Chernobyl (1986) and Fukushima (2011). Radiation risks make nuclear reactors uninsurable except by national governments.

Nuclear energy is touted as “clean energy,” but in fact it is dirty, toxic, and a major health risk. Oregon PSR urges you to note “No” on HB 2038.

Andy Harris, MD