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Date: February 24, 2025

To: Oregon State Legislators

Subject: Support for House Bill 2410 – Umatilla County Small Modular Reactor Demonstration Project

Chair Lively, Vice-Chair Gamba, Vice-Chair Levy, and Committee Members,

The Board of Columbia County Commissioners strongly supports **House Bill 2410** and urges you to **VOTE YES** to enable Umatilla County's small modular reactor (SMR) energy facility demonstration project. This narrowly tailored proposal aligns with Oregon's clean energy future and offers insights that could benefit Columbia County as we address our own critical energy deficit.

Supporting Umatilla County's Initiative

HB 2410 authorizes the Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) to issue a site certificate for an SMR demonstration project in Umatilla County, utilizing microgrid technologies to enhance community energy resilience. This pilot project, capped at 300 MW and designed for independent operation from the grid, represents a forward-thinking approach to meeting growing energy demands with carbon-free power. We commend Umatilla County's leadership in exploring this advanced nuclear technology and seeking community consent through a legislative referral to its voters.

Columbia County faces a parallel energy challenge. As detailed in our white paper, *Transmission and Load Planning: Addressing Electric Energy Deficit in Greater Columbia County Region* (dated February 18, 2024), our region is grappling with an oversubscribed power capacity. A single industrial proposal demands 35 MW, with additional requests of 9.9 MW short-term and 9.9 MW annually over the next decade—far exceeding our current 40 MW headroom. Transmission upgrades, typically a 5-10 year endeavor, are urgently needed within five years to sustain economic growth. While HB 2410 is specific to Umatilla County, its success could inform solutions for counties like ours facing similar load and transmission constraints.

A Step Toward Statewide Energy Solutions

Oregon's electricity demand is projected to surge by over 30% in the next decade, straining our ability to meet clean energy goals. Nuclear power, providing nearly half of U.S. carbon-free

electricity, is a proven resource that SMRs could modernize with enhanced safety, factory-built efficiency, and reduced transmission demands. HB 2410's requirement for a State Department of Energy report—due within one year of enactment—will clarify regulatory needs for SMR deployment, potentially paving the way for broader application across Oregon. Columbia County sees this as a valuable opportunity to learn from Umatilla's pilot, especially given our shared reliance on complex utility networks like Bonneville Power Administration and Portland General Electric.

Future Benefits for Columbia County

While HB 2410 centers on Umatilla County, a successful demonstration could demonstrate SMRs' viability for regions like ours. Our goals—enhancing transmission capacity, securing reliable power for industrial growth, and supporting community resilience—align with the bill's intent. If proven effective, SMRs could complement our efforts to serve nearly 1,000 acres of industrial land and accommodate housing growth, all while reducing dependence on distant transmission upgrades. We stand ready to monitor this pilot's outcomes and collaborate with state partners to adapt its lessons locally.

HB 2410 is a pragmatic, community-driven step to test advanced nuclear technology in Oregon. By voting YES, you support Umatilla County's innovation and lay the groundwork for addressing energy challenges statewide. Columbia County endorses this effort not as a lead but as a partner eager to see its potential realized.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON


Kellie Jo Smith, Chair


Casey Garrett, Commissioner


Margaret Magruder, Commissioner