



February 26, 2025

Oregon State Legislature
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Oppose House Bill 2038 – Requires the State Department of Energy to study nuclear energy, including nuclear waste disposal from nuclear energy.

Dear Chair Lively, Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy, and members of the Committee,

On behalf of the more than 55,000 members and supporters of the Sierra Club Oregon Chapter, we write in opposition of House Bill 2038, that as it stands, directs the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE) to engage in a biased study of the alleged benefits of nuclear energy in Oregon. We encourage the Committee to adopt amendments that look at both the pros and cons of nuclear power.

The bill will direct ODOE to study nuclear power in a way that is skewed with a focus of the study on the *positives* of nuclear energy. This is a one-sided mandate that risks presenting a biased view that ignores the well-documented dangers of nuclear power. While the bill does mention nuclear waste disposal and safety, it is next to language that emphasizes feasibility and benefits without equally scrutinizing the inherent dangers and unresolved issues which would set the stage for future pro-nuclear policymaking. The bill lists the following study topics: how “constructing nuclear power plants” will be good for “economic growth” and “workforce development,” and how it’s a “locally produced” energy with less dependence on foreign energy, etc. This list covers the “advantages” of nuclear energy. However, all the positives of nuclear energy are meaningless without understanding nuclear energy’s negatives.

HB 2038’s study list includes the, “Safety of nuclear energy and nuclear waste disposal.” It does not mention studying the dangers of nuclear power, of which there are many. All nuclear reactors, even small ones, are at risk for severe accidents. Radioactive waste is part of even routine operations and is not safe. These risks are multiplied by extreme weather due to climate change, weakening regulations¹ and human fallibility.² The historical record of nuclear accidents is well documented and should give us pause. Extreme weather, seismic events, and human error remain significant risks that could lead to widespread radioactive contamination. We do not want to divert more state funds to study a technology we already know is potentially very dangerous.

Nuclear power remains a costly and high-risk energy source, with well-documented safety concerns from extreme weather, seismic activity, and human error all of which could lead to widespread radioactive contamination. Additionally, funding this study diverts resources from proven clean energy solutions like

¹ The Advance Act, passed in 2024 by the U.S. Congress, weakens regulatory oversight. [Senate Nuclear Fetishists Take Lid Off of Pandora’s Box](https://columbusfreepress.com/article/senate-nuclear-fetishists-take-lid-pandora%E2%80%99s-box), by David Kraft Kraft, Director, NEIS, June 21, 2024 <https://columbusfreepress.com/article/senate-nuclear-fetishists-take-lid-pandora%E2%80%99s-box>

²Accidents reach across space and time, i.e.: 35 years after Chernobyl, parts of Ukraine and Belarus are uninhabitable due to high radiation levels that will last for thousands of years.



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wind, solar, and storage, delaying Oregon's transition to a truly sustainable energy future. For these reasons, we urge the committee to oppose HB 2038 and instead focus on investing in safer, more cost-effective renewable energy solutions.

Respectfully submitted,

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