

Testimony in Opposition to HB2410

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joshua Baker, and I am a resident of Portland. I hold a PhD in political science and have extensively researched how corporate interests can act strategically to shape policy in ways that serve private agendas rather than the public good. In my opinion, HB2410 is not just about a single small modular reactor (SMR) site—it creates a dangerous precedent that weakens Oregon’s nuclear safeguards and paves the way for further deregulation.

Though framed as a limited demonstration project, HB2410 creates an exception that could justify further rollbacks of nuclear restrictions. Once an SMR is approved under loosened rules, future proposals will argue for similar treatment, making nuclear expansion easier without the public scrutiny that current laws require.

HB2410 Opens the Door for Nuclear Expansion

Oregon’s nuclear restrictions exist to ensure that any move toward nuclear power is deliberate, transparent, and includes enforceable waste disposal requirements. Rather than addressing these regulations directly, HB2410 carves out an exception, setting the stage for others to follow. This is how regulations are dismantled—not all at once, but through targeted exemptions that later justify broader rollbacks. If passed, HB2410 would:

- Bypass key legal and environmental safeguards for nuclear development.
- Shift the debate from whether Oregon should allow nuclear energy to how fast it should expand.
- Set a precedent for future projects to seek similar exemptions, reducing public oversight.

Once this door is open, the argument becomes: “Since we already have a nuclear project in Oregon, why not approve more?”

HB2410 Serves Private Interests, Not the Public

The push for nuclear expansion is not coming from broad public demand—it is driven by corporate and tech industry figures with financial and ideological stakes in nuclear energy. A significant factor behind this push is the tech sector’s need for massive amounts of energy to power data centers designed to support AI growth. Industry leaders are betting on nuclear to sustain this growth, assuming the AI bubble will be the one that never bursts. But this is not a public energy strategy—it is a corporate gamble, shifting risk onto communities while securing energy for private profit.

HB2410 Undermines Public Oversight

Oregon law requires a statewide vote before approving nuclear projects because these decisions impact energy policy, environmental safety, and long-term waste disposal across the state. HB2410 removes that safeguard, limiting approval to only Umatilla County, despite

nuclear's broader implications. While local communities deserve input, they should not be the only ones deciding whether Oregon reintroduces nuclear energy. Even if this bill required a statewide vote, it would still be deeply flawed—it creates an unjustified exception with no clear public benefit.

In my opinion, HB2410 is a deliberate attempt to weaken nuclear regulations, sidestep public oversight, and serve private industry under the guise of a limited demonstration project. The legislature should not allow this bill to set a precedent for further erosion of nuclear protections.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to vote NO on HB2410.