

Testimony in Opposition to SB 216

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Josh Baker, and I am a resident of Portland, Oregon. I hold a PhD in political science and have spent years researching how corporate and political influence networks strategically shape policy—often prioritizing private interests over the public good. I believe that SB 216 is another instance of private interests being prioritized over the public good. For these reasons, I strongly oppose Senate Bill 216.

SB 216 seeks to remove Oregon's crucial requirement for an established, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste before nuclear power plants can be approved. This safeguard is essential because radioactive waste poses long-lasting environmental and public health threats that persist for thousands of years. To permit nuclear facilities without first solving the waste disposal issue is an irresponsible transfer of severe risks onto future generations.

The bill also eliminates Oregon's statewide voter approval requirement for nuclear plant certification - greatly diminishing democratic oversight on issues with significant long-term implications. This would be a significant blow to transparency and accountability, leaving decisions susceptible to corporate influence rather than public interest. At this time in our nation's history, it should be a top priority of all members of the legislature to avoid contributing to a diminishing of corporate or political accountability.

Nuclear power remains economically inefficient, slow to deploy, and burdened with significant costs. Renewable energy sources—such as solar, wind, and efficiency measures—are safer, faster to implement, and more economically viable.

Oregon must continue to prioritize sustainable, democratic, and responsible energy solutions rather than weakening necessary environmental protections for corporate benefit.

I urge the committee to reject SB 216.

Thank you.