

Submitter: Ann Turner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Energy and Environment

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB216

To the Senate Committee on Energy & Environment

Chair Sollman, Vice Chair Brock Smith, Committee Members Golden, Pham and Robinson,

My name is Ann Turner. I live in Portland, Oregon and am a retired physician. I am a member of Oregon Physicians for Social Responsibility and Co-President of the Board. Oregon PSR works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival. Nuclear power plants are such a threat.

As a physician, I worked at Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, caring primarily for low income and minority patients, those most vulnerable to the devastating impacts environmental injustice.

I strongly urge you to oppose SB 216. This Act repeals the requirement that there be a licensed repository for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste before a site certificate for a nuclear-fueled thermal power plant may be issued. The reason that there is no federally-recognized repository for nuclear waste is because there is no SAFE way to store radioactive waste from facilities that generate nuclear power, including small modular nuclear reactors (SMNR's).

Uranium is mined on indigenous lands, exposing tribal communities to the long-term health and safety impacts of radiation. These include cancer, birth defects, thyroid disease and death. Accidents or leaks from nuclear plants pose these same risks to the surrounding communities, contaminating soil and water, with radioactive waste that remains hazardous for thousands and thousands of years.

Nuclear power is extremely costly, with construction delays, and is consistently over budget. The cost of building a nuclear power plant will be passed on to ratepayers who are already reeling from increasing utility bills. In my practice, many patients came to me to request that I sign a form to prevent their power from being turned off because it would put their health in jeopardy. We have already seen rates rise significantly in Georgia when their new nuclear power plant came on line. Last year in Oregon, there were more customers disconnected from their utilities than ever before because of their inability to pay their bills, as a result of substantial rate increases.

Operating nuclear power plants generate radioactive waste that cannot be stored safely. Hanford, right here in our backyard, is a highly contaminated site. Even worse will be the devastation caused by nuclear accidents such as the ones at Chernobyl

and Fukushima. The communities surrounding nuclear plants are frontline communities already disproportionately impacted by pollution.

As legislators, I ask that you oppose SB 216 that would do away with the requirement that there be a SAFE repository for nuclear waste before a site certificate for a nuclear power plant may be issued. We must prevent what we cannot cure.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Ann Turner, MD
Portland