



mothers for nuclear

March 12, 2025

Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

My name is Heather Hoff, and I live in San Luis Obispo, California. I appreciate the opportunity to provide verbal testimony before this committee on March 10, 2025, and I want to thank you for your curiosity and open-mindedness. I took a long time to change my mind about nuclear energy, and asking tough questions was a crucial part of that journey.

I co-founded an environmental nonprofit called Mothers for Nuclear (MfN), launched on Earth Day in 2016. Our mission is to communicate about nuclear energy in a way that addresses concerns and challenges that don't have easy answers. Reliable, digestible information about nuclear energy is hard to find, especially for those outside the industry.

From Fear to Understanding

I used to be skeptical—even fearful—of nuclear energy. I understand and empathize with the concerns raised in this forum because I once shared them. Radiation, accidents, and waste were among my biggest worries. But after working at Diablo Canyon Nuclear Power Plant for 21 years, it became clear to me that fear, more than the technology itself, was the real danger.

One moment that solidified this realization was the Tohoku Earthquake and Fukushima Daiichi accident on March 11, 2011. I was in the control room at Diablo Canyon, terrified by the media reports I was hearing. I nearly quit my job.

Then, as more information emerged, I realized how much of the panic was driven by misinformation. The tsunami and earthquake tragically claimed nearly 20,000 lives, but the nuclear accident itself caused no direct harm. In contrast, the rushed evacuation due to nuclear fear led to an estimated 1,500–2,600 deaths. Even today, 14 years later, reports confirm there have been no measurable health impacts from radiation exposure. What we should truly fear is what happens when we shut down nuclear plants and rely on fossil fuels instead.

What This Means for Oregon

Oregon is known for its environmental leadership. But despite investments in renewable energy, natural gas still plays a major role in Oregon's electricity mix. California, which aggressively pursued renewables, still gets nearly 50% of its electricity from methane gas, despite decades of effort.

I want more clean energy of all kinds. But if we are serious about cutting emissions, we cannot afford to exclude nuclear energy. Oregon has the opportunity to lead by incorporating nuclear into its clean energy mix, ensuring reliable, affordable power while reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

Addressing Nuclear Waste: Facts Over Fear

One of the most misunderstood topics is nuclear waste. It is often portrayed as an unsolvable problem, but the reality is far different. Commercial used nuclear fuel has never harmed anyone or anything. Meanwhile, fossil fuel pollution contributes to millions of premature deaths each year.

Mothers for Nuclear is currently working with the U.S. Department of Energy to facilitate community discussions on used fuel storage. What we've found is that when people hear the full context—especially from experts in nuclear science—their fears often shift. Most impacts from a nuclear fuel storage site would be no different from any other large infrastructure project: construction, traffic, and logistics—not radiation risks.

A Call to Action

I acknowledge that nuclear energy has challenges—cost, timelines, and public perception. But all energy sources face hurdles, and nuclear's benefits far outweigh its difficulties. We must move past misinformation and make decisions based on science and data, not fear.

Oregon has the chance to lead in clean energy innovation. I urge this committee to seriously consider nuclear as part of Oregon's energy future. Our climate, economy, and future generations depend on it.

Thank you for your time, and I welcome any questions.

Heather Hoff,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Hoff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cofounder, Mothers for Nuclear