

Submitter: Thor Hinckley
On Behalf Of: Third Act Oregon
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2945

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Members of the Committee,

On behalf of Third Act Oregon, Oregonians over 60 working to protect the climate and democracy, we ask that you support HB 2945, to help accelerate Oregon's transition to zero-emission electric school buses. With the typical school bus being diesel-powered, this bill is a common-sense and urgently needed investment in our children's health, the air we breathe, and the future we are building for Oregon.

Protect Schoolchildren from Toxic Diesel Pollution

Every day, more than 300,000 Oregonians are exposed to diesel exhaust from school buses. Diesel Exhaust is a known carcinogen and a key contributor to asthma, bronchitis, and other respiratory issues. Schoolchildren are especially vulnerable to the impacts of diesel exhaust because their lungs are still developing, and they breathe more air per pound of body weight than adults. Electric zero-emission school buses offer a safer alternative. These eliminate harmful tailpipe emissions, ensuring kids can get to and from school without being exposed to pollution that harms their health and learning potential.

A Key Step in Tackling Oregon's Top Source of Climate Pollution

As you know, transportation remains Oregon's largest source of climate pollution, responsible for over 40% of Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions. Electrifying our school bus fleets is a critical step in decarbonizing this sector and aligning with Oregon's climate goals. HB 2945 is a forward-thinking solution that aligns with our climate commitments, keeps momentum going, and builds on our progress to date.

Driving Clean Energy Jobs and Community Resilience

Electrifying school buses doesn't just reduce emissions — it also helps grow Oregon's clean energy economy. Purchasing zero-emission vehicles supports good-paying jobs in vehicle manufacturing, charging infrastructure deployment, and reduces the need for long-term maintenance. It also helps build smarter, more resilient energy systems. Planning for charging infrastructure encourages local energy innovation and enhances grid flexibility — especially when paired with smart charging and vehicle-to-grid capabilities.

Equity for Frontline Communities

It's important to note HB 2945's focus on equity. By prioritizing at least 40% of funding for disproportionately impacted communities it will help ensure the health and climate benefits of zero-emission buses reach the families who need them most —

including communities of color, low-income families, and neighborhoods overburdened by air pollution. No child in Oregon should suffer worse health outcomes because of where they live or the bus they ride.

Smart Policy with Long-Term Benefits

HB 2945 requires a transition only when the total cost — including grants and rebates — is at parity with traditional diesel models. This bill ensures Oregon is ready to seize the moment. From Third Act Oregon's perspective, HB 2945 is not just a smart climate policy — it's a moral imperative. It's about protecting our kids. It's about making communities healthier. It's about investing in the jobs of the future. And it's about building a clean, just transportation system for all Oregonians.

As elders in our community, Third Act Oregon urges you to support HB 2945 and to prioritize zero-emission transportation investments as part of Oregon's broader transportation funding package. Thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to a healthier, more sustainable Oregon.

Thor Hinckley

Third Act Oregon

Coordinating Committee