

Submitter: Nora Lehmann  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Joint Committee On Transportation  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2945

Good afternoon Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and members of the Committee. My name is Nora Lehmann, and I am testifying on behalf of Families for Climate. We are a grassroots, volunteer-powered organization working to mobilize parents, kids and families for climate justice and a livable future for all. Our membership consists of over one thousand parents, caregivers and teachers across Oregon.

We are enthusiastically in support of HB 2945 and the -1, which will accelerate Oregon's transition to zero-emission school buses. In the medium and long term, electrifying our school fleet is an important part of cleaning up our transportation system, currently our state's largest source of climate pollution.

In the immediate term, zero-emission school buses are a desperately needed investment in our kids' health and well-being. Over 300,000 Oregon children ride school buses, a large proportion of which run on diesel fuel, a known carcinogen and a major contributor to asthma, and other respiratory issues, as well as being linked to heart disease and developmental issues.

On a personal note, I have two children in elementary school. A couple times a year I volunteer to chaperone their field trips, and am treated to a ride on one of these diesel school buses, which appear largely unchanged since my days of riding them in the 1980's and 90's—that is to say, smelly and extremely loud. It is fantastic news both for the health of our climate and the health of our students, teachers, and bus-drivers, that the technology for clean and quiet buses is now available, so that our kids can get to and from their places of learning without being exposed to harmful pollution.

Finally, we all know that unfortunately our public schools are always strapped for money. Research shows that the shift to electric buses saves school districts money over the lifetime of the vehicle, since they cost significantly less to fuel and maintain than diesel buses. Importantly, this cost saving is amplified when the state invests in technical assistance and planning capacity for school districts transitioning to electric fleets.

HB 2945 is not just a smart climate policy — it's also smart health policy, smart education policy, and smart financial policy. We urge you to support this bill as a critical part of building a clean, just transportation system for all Oregonians.

Thank you.

Nora Lehmann on behalf of Families for Climate