

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on Transportation
re: HB 2945**

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Founded in 1968, the Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership-based organization. We advance equitable, innovative, and collaborative solutions to Oregon's environmental challenges for today and future generations.

Re: Oregon Environmental Council support for HB 2945

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain, Vice Chairs Starr and Boshart Davis, and members of the committee,

On behalf of our thousands of members statewide, I am writing today to strongly support HB 2945. This bill, if enacted, would set clear direction about when school districts should electrify, and create the Zero Emission School Bus Fund, providing significant funding and support to school districts seeking to replace polluting diesel-powered buses with clean, electric powered models. Mindful that not all school districts have the capacity to evaluate costs and benefits, HB 2945 would also provide school staff and administrators the technical assistance they need to plan a successful transition of their fleets.

Multiple studies find that diesel pollution can be harmful to human health—especially to children's developing lungs and brains. We know that diesel pollution increases childhood asthma rates and [research in Georgia has shown that districts which have converted to electric school buses actually experienced higher test scores](#). Zero emissions school buses create cleaner communities and safer air to breathe. It's time to stop exposing our children's lungs to diesel engine's toxic exhaust.

But diesel particulates are not the only pollutants generated by burning diesel. Transportation accounts for roughly 35 percent of Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions, making it the sector generating the most climate pollution. Reducing climate pollution in this sector can directly decrease the incidence of harmful wildfires, extreme heat, and drought brought on by climate change. These in turn, affect the housing stability of people's homes affected by wildfires, insurance premiums rising or not covering areas prone to extreme weather events, and puts the health and safety of our oldest and youngest neighbors at risk.

One of Oregon's key strategies for reaching our climate pollution reduction goals is to reduce the number of gas powered vehicles on our roads, and most especially from our heavy-duty fleets, which include school buses. Electrifying our school bus fleets across the state is a critical step in decarbonizing this sector.

Oregon has taken bold action in the past to cut pollution from cars and trucks — from adopting the Advanced Clean Trucks Rule, the Advanced Clean Cars Rules, and supporting investments through the Climate Protection Program and Medium Heavy Duty Zero Emissions Vehicles Rebate Program. Alone these programs and policies would be a drop in the bucket. But together, they are part of a fabric that can help build certainty in our electrified vehicle and charging marketplace, and support manufacturers investing in an electric future. HB 2945 moves us closer to that goal.

Electrifying school buses grows Oregon's clean energy economy. Investing in zero-emission vehicles supports good-paying jobs in vehicle manufacturing, charging infrastructure deployment, and long-term maintenance. It helps build smarter, more resilient energy systems. Planning for charging infrastructure encourages local energy innovation and can enhance grid flexibility — especially when paired with smart charging and vehicle-to-grid capabilities.

Finally, I'd like to commend the work the Joint Committee on Transportation has put toward creating a safety forward, and multimodal transportation package. As the committee considers this transportation framework, OEC and our members are invested stakeholders in seeking a balanced package that prioritizes programs and policies that work toward improving our air, create clean tech jobs and put us on track to achieve our greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

Sincerely,

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