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Testimony relating to HB2949.

Chair Tran and members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government and Veterans:

I write as cofacilitator of Southern Oregon Climate Action Now, an organization of some 2,000 Southern Oregonians who are concerned about the climate crisis and encourage state action to address it. As rural and coastal Southern Oregonians, we live on the frontlines of the warming, reducing snowpack, heatwaves, drought, rising sea level and the increasing wildfire risk that these trends conspire to impose on us. Because of this, we pay close attention to what is happening in the state legislature that relates to climate.

A few moments of reflection on the Portland Critical Energy Infrastructure Hub will reveal that this facility constitutes a serious problem. The uncontested series of Hub realities (e.g., Multnomah 2022, Whitcomb 2024, Smith undated) indicate Portland and the state have a serious problem:

- The Hub comprises tanks that store 90% of Oregon’s liquid fuel and all the jet fuel used by the International Airport; most of the tanks were built in the 1950s.
- The tanks are located on a substrate (soil) that will probably simply liquefy in the event of a sever seismic event causing their contents to escape into the surrounding community and nearby river.
- The likelihood that the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake will strike within a few decades is rising.
- Should the earthquake occur and destroy the hub, the environmental damage and greenhouse gas emissions will be devastating.
- Oregon Senate Bill 1567 (2022) drew attention to the problem, but the threat tells us it’s time to do more.

Wilson (2024), the Clackamas County Resilience Coordinator with the Department of Disaster Management, opined that “During a Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake, these facilities will have cascading failures due to long-duration and long-period amplified shaking, that will produce liquefaction, differential settlement and lateral spreading – likely creating the worst oil spill in U.S. history.”

The question the Oregon legislature faces is simple: “Are we smart enough to recognize the problem and address it, or do we kick this can down the road again?”

Those of us living in rural Oregon may not be under the immediate threat from a seismic event destroying the hub, but, undoubtedly, we will suffer from its after-effects. In addition, it is inevitable that such an event will severely compromise the commitments that we have collectively made via the Climate Protection Program and other programs developed by the legislature to reduce Oregon’s greenhouse gas emissions substantially by 2050.

One of the critical problems surrounding the entire Hub facility is lack of adequate insurance to cover liability should a severe seismic event occur. For this reason, it is entirely appropriate that charge the “Department of Environmental Quality to contract with a third party to study and assess financial assurance requirements for owners or operators of bulk oils and liquid fuels terminals.” (OLIS 2025) especially HB3450 and HB 2949.

Respectfully Submitted



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