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OREGONrural ACTION

SOWING SEEDS OF **CHANGE**

February 16, 2026

Chair Sollman, vice chair Brock Smith, and members of the Committee,

My name is Kaleb Lay and I'm director of policy & research with Oregon Rural Action. ORA is a community-led nonprofit that has worked for years with the communities affected by the pollution crises in northeast Oregon's Lower Umatilla Basin. The LUB is one of the most diverse and economically productive regions in Oregon; at the same time, it is home to a disproportionately high rate of low-income households as well as some of the state's most polluted water and air. We have extensive experience engaging with the DEQ permitting process, the ongoing backlog, and the broader problems with how DEQ regulates sources of pollution.

ORA is opposed to HB 4102 as introduced, and our previous testimony on the base bill is available on OLIS. The introduced bill lacks basic safeguards to ensure this third-party permitting process is not abused by bad actors. We also believe that the most appropriate solution to DEQ's permitting backlog is to provide the Department with the resources and executive leadership it needs, not to outsource permitting of the private sector to the private sector.

However, we believe that the -1 amendment makes significant improvements to the bill, and ORA is willing to move our position to neutral if it is adopted. We are extremely grateful to Senator Pham and for introducing the amendment and for working with our environmental justice and labor coalition. The -1 adds simple, straightforward safeguards to this expedited permitting process, including requirements that DEQ consider whether a permit holder has a history of violating environmental laws before approving their request for an expedited permitting process, clarity around assessing conflicts of interest in selecting third party contractors to write permits, and language supporting labor best practices.

I'll also note that several members of the House Committee on Climate, Energy, & Environment voiced their support for consideration of these additional safeguards when HB 4102 moved out of that committee.

We urge this committee to adopt the -1 amendment.

Respectfully,

Kaleb Lay
Oregon Rural Action