

Submitter: Robert Sowdon

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On
Capital Construction

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4084

Co-Chairs and Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

HB 4084B – Opposition / Concerns regarding the Industrial Site Loan Fund and Fast-Track Permitting

I am writing to express my concerns regarding HB 4084B. While the goal of economic development is shared by all Oregonians, this bill raises significant issues regarding fiscal responsibility and the protection of our natural resources.

1. Fiscal Responsibility and Market Neutrality HB 4084B directs taxpayer dollars into the Industrial Site Loan Fund. Using public funds to subsidize or provide low-interest loans for specific "key industry clusters" shifts the financial risk from private investors to Oregon taxpayers. This creates an uneven playing field, where the government picks "winners" rather than allowing a neutral, free-market environment where all businesses can thrive regardless of their size or industry.

2. Resource Management and Personal Liberty A major concern with "fast-tracking" large-scale industrial projects—specifically data centers—is the impact on local resources. As noted by the Oregon Citizens Lobby, counties like Umatilla and Morrow are already facing severe water management challenges. With Morrow County under a drought declaration since August 2025, it is fiscally and environmentally irresponsible to expedite high-water-use projects in these areas. We must ensure that "fast-tracking" does not mean "bypassing" the due diligence required to protect the property rights and water access of local farmers and residents.

3. Expansion of Government Oversight The creation of a Joint Permitting Council adds another layer of administrative bureaucracy. Rather than creating new councils to manage complex projects, the legislature should focus on simplifying the regulatory burden for all Oregonians, reducing the need for "special" fast-track programs that require additional agency coordination and funding.

Closing I urge the committee to reconsider the appropriation for the Industrial Site Loan Fund and to ensure that any permitting efficiencies do not come at the expense of local resource stability or fiscal transparency. At a minimum, I request an amendment to exclude counties under active drought declarations from the fast-track eligibility for high-water-consumption industrial projects.

Thank you for your time and for your service to our state.