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January 29, 2015

To: Senator Chris Edwards, Chair Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Alan Olsen, Vice-Chair Environment and Natural Resources
Senator Michael Dembrow
Senator Floyd Prozanski
Senator Chuck Thomsen
From: Carrie Nyssen, Vice President, Advocacy and Air Quality

Re: SB 324 Relating to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from
transportation fuels

The mission of the American Lung Association in Oregon is to save lives by improving lung health and preventing lung disease. Our organization advocates on behalf of healthy air, particularly for Oregonians with lung disease. We strongly support Oregon's Clean Fuels Program and urge your support for Senate Bill 324.

When we look at the cost of unhealthy fuels – we need to consider the health benefits of implementing policies we know will improve our air quality and improve the quality of life of those affected by lung disease and create healthier communities. We know that there is a cost – a hidden dirty fuel tax – every additional day we remain addicted to unhealthy fossil fuels.

Transportation accounts for the greatest share of Oregon's greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants.

Air pollution affects the health of all Oregonians, but disproportionately impacts children, the elderly, low-income communities and those with chronic illnesses such as lung and heart disease. And these health affects cost our state millions of dollars annually with health care expenses and taking people out of the workforce. The hidden cost of air pollution can be especially hard on small business. If you have a staff of five, just one person missing work due to repeated asthma episodes can really add up in costs.

People do not have choice in the air they breathe. Breathing polluted air shortens life expectancy and increases visits to health care providers and hospitals. Cleaner fuels are critical to those living near major freeways, ports, rail yards and other pollution hotspots.

Cleaner fuels are vital to reduce smog and soot pollution; cleaner fuels can directly reduce common health problems caused by toxic air pollution, like asthma, cancer and COPD.

Besides the human toll, there are the real financial costs. We pay for pollution through our insurance premiums, medical bills, lost business productivity, and premature deaths.

People no longer buy into industry's hollow claims that we must choose between public health and a strong economy – we can have both. As we reduce pollution, we improve health and lower health care costs.

We know the clean fuel standard works. Our colleagues in California, where air pollution costs nearly 10,000 lives and billions in health care costs annually, have seen the benefits of their clean fuel standard working. The low carbon fuel standard in California has displaced nearly three billion gallons of gasoline and diesel with a growing mix of cleaner alternatives. In 2011-2012, the program had taken the equivalent of a half-million cars off the roads in California.

The transition to clean fuels and clean transportation technologies is a win-win – it's a win for climate and a win for our lung health and public health.