

Testimony of Deb Evans and Ron Schaaf
In support of HB 4105
February 10, 2020

Chair Karin Power
House Committee on Energy and Environment

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Chair Power and Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment,

I am honored to be here and give testimony in strong support of HB 4105. My husband and I live in rural southern Oregon between Ashland and Klamath Falls up in the Cascade Mountains. We grow food and manage timber ground in Jackson and Klamath Counties and we have increasingly seen the effects of a changing climate on our land and the surrounding landscape. Decreased snow pack, hotter summer temperatures and drought stressed insect infestation in our timber ground—all are predicted to worsen and all are threatening our livelihood and that of many of our neighbors.

On top of those worries, we have also been faced with an additional threat of the proposed Pacific Connector export fossil fuel pipeline for almost 15 years now. If approved, this pipeline would cross 157 acres of timber we own in Klamath County contributing directly to these climate impacts while adding additional risk in our fire prone, tinder dry southern Oregon region.

My daughter, my husband and I have come up from Southern Oregon today, because we want to thank you for your leadership and for the leadership of our Representative Pam Marsh, Senator Jeff Golden and Representative Rob Nosse in introducing this bill. We believe that the future prosperity of this state and the natural resources that support so many of us in rural Oregon, depend on the actions of our government to transition us away from the fossil fuel sources that threaten our economy and toward the renewable energy that Oregon is so fortunate to have in abundant supply.

When business-as-usual actions do not address the existential threats we face that come from the continued use of fossil fuels, then it is the responsibility of government and our legislative leaders to provide laws that will protect Oregonians from these threats. To protect what we love and what we will be leaving to our children and all future Oregonians, we must transition to cheaper, renewable energy sources. Oregon is lucky to have renewable energy—including solar, wind, hydro and geothermal—that are already providing Oregon communities with significant revenue and Oregonians with jobs and income in counties like Sherman County which went from one of the lowest incomes per capita to one of the highest incomes per capita in Oregon, because of the 500 plus wind turbines that came into their county in the early 2000s.

HB 4105 rightly creates safety regulations for rail transport and disallows new fossil fuel infrastructure on state lands. We feel this is both necessary and critical.

This past weekend, we spent Saturday and Sunday meeting with eminent domain attorneys and more than 35 landowners from every political persuasion who face the same threat of what ultimately could be multiple pipelines with a variety of products—natural gas, oil, natural gas liquids. Pipelines, not to bring fossil fuels to anyone in Oregon, but to simply bring what is likely Canadian gas through our state to Asian markets. Bill who recently went through triple bypass surgery, Clarence whose wife had knee surgery yesterday, Larry, Stacey, Pam and the list goes on of the many impacted landowners who are also in strong support of HB 4105. All of us share a deep love of our families and of this state. We are tired, but we are determined and we are honored to share what we have learned and join with the state and you, our legislators to put these needed protections in place.

We have directly experienced the power and incessant desire of interests outside of Oregon hoping to make a dollar at the expense of our properties, our livelihoods and our incredible natural resources here in Oregon. This is wrong and this will not go away until Oregon stands up to this threat and lays down clear laws that prevent the harm of these antiquated and harmful fossil fuel infrastructure projects and turn instead toward a future that utilizes renewable energy. The time is now, we can not afford to wait.

We urge you to push for this restriction of new infrastructure on state lands and for the safety restrictions to ensure safer handling of oil and gas by train. These threats continue to plague Oregon. Protections are needed for the safety of the public and to protect the land that provides for our economy and our livelihoods.

Thank you for putting the Oregon we know, love and depend on, first.