

Testimony prepared for Committee meeting, Feb 26, 2026

Dear Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on proposed bill HB26-1226, “Manage Emissions from Electric Generating Units.”

I am a resident of Fountain, CO, 80817, with a background in sustainability and environmental compliance and management, having worked for the Army and Fort Carson in these programs for over 35 years. I’m a mom, grandma, and now unbelievably a great grandma! Several of my family members also live in Fountain.

I’m concerned about the continued operation of the Ray Nixon power plant. I am testifying in support of HB26-1226.

I live less than 5 miles as the crow flies from Ray D Nixon power plant operated by Colorado Springs Utilities. I do not receive any direct benefit from the plant’s operations as the City of Fountain has its own municipal electric utility.

But by proximity, I am affected by pollution from the plant. As a “senior citizen” I am at considerable risk of lung and heart disease from the burning of fossil fuels. My great grandchild who also lives in Fountain and whom I care for part-time just turned 4. I am genuinely concerned about the health of my family and others living in my community from coal plant emissions.

I’m aware that CSU supports legislation, SB26-022, to keep the Nixon coal plant in operation rather than to close it by 2029 as agreed upon with Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) in 2020. The bill would allow an opportunity to keep the coal plant open until as late as 2040. CSU cites market volatility and prohibitive cost of replacement electricity for the need to keep the plant operational. The most cost effective and long term solution is to close the plant by 2030. The plant should be closed in accordance with the CSU Clean Energy Plan.

As a back stop, HB26-1226, will reduce emissions from the coal plant if it is allowed to continue to operate as proposed in SB26-022 (Challenges Meeting 2030 Reduction Goals) by requiring the addition of pollution controls for nitrogen oxide. NOx is a contributor to the brown cloud and ground level ozone which trigger health alerts, especially for those with asthma and other lung/heart disease, the elderly, and young children. These health care or “external” costs compared to the operation of the facility are borne by citizens, who deal with increasing insurance costs, emergency room visits, and medications, even as utility costs fluctuate.

While I'm involved in environmental and sustainability topics, I'm not sure how much awareness Fountain and El Paso Co residents, even folks in Pueblo, have of the request by CSU and may not understand implications for our communities. I doubt that most people have knowledge of the two bills concerning operation of Ray Nixon power plant.

Fountain and southern El Paso Co residents receive the brunt of the pollution from Ray Nixon, but it has regional and even global impacts. Residents in the Fountain area are generally low income, military families, and civilian employees working at Fort Carson or other military installations. As a retired Army civilian, I understand that many individuals living in the local community and on post have compromised health issues that are complicated by continued air pollution from the plant. There is also a risk of toxic pollutants such as mercury entering the air, soil, and water in the local area.

Part of the reason CSU was not required to put additional pollution controls on the coal plant was because it would be closed by Dec 31, 2029. If the plant is allowed to remain open for another 10 years, then CSU should be required to install pollution controls. They should also report to the Committee their status on reaching greenhouse gas reduction goals and describe what they are doing to close the facility as soon as possible. Closure is the best option to protect our health, economy, community, and environment and it makes more fiscal sense to me to pursue partnerships, innovation, and unique funding sources rather than prolong the life of the coal plant.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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