TO: Chair Jules Bailey
House Committee on Energy & Environment

FROM: Sarah Higginbotham, State Director, Environment Oregon
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DATE: February 19, 2013

RE: HB 2893

As the State Director for Environment Oregon, I represent our over 30,000 members in support of repowering Oregon with clean solar energy. Environment Oregon is a statewide, citizen-based, environmental advocacy organization.

We are in support of the intention of HB 2893 and in agreement with our colleagues at Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon, Sierra Club, and Oregon Solar Energy Industry Association about improving upon it in a working group.

Oregon should work to achieve 250,000 solar rooftops by 2025

When it comes to clean energy, Oregon is a leader not a follower. If we're serious about reducing our dependence on dirty and dangerous fuels, there is no question: we have to tap into the power of the sun. However, right now, less than 1 percent of our energy comes from the sun, when we could be generating power on every Oregon home, office, school, warehouse, and retail store. This summer, Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center released a report that aimed to identify Oregon's solar potential.[1] We concluded that Oregon could feasibly generate up to 10 percent of its electricity mix from solar power by 2025—30 times as much as we generate today and the equivalent of taking 730,000 cars off the road. **Oregon should be reaching toward the bold and achievable goal of 250,000 solar rooftops by 2025. HB 2839 will be one key step toward getting there.**

Oregon is falling behind when it should be leading

Oregon has less solar energy infrastructure installed per person than the national average. At the end of 2010, Oregon had about 24 megawatts (MW) of solar photovoltaic capacity installed in total, or about 6 watts per resident. In comparison, the national average is 7 watts per resident. Leading states, such as New Jersey and California, had five times as many watts per resident. **What makes New Jersey and California different from Oregon is not so much the quality of their solar resources, but more the effectiveness of the policies these states have put into place to accelerate the market for solar power.**

Rooftop solar is a valuable resource for Oregon's energy future

The Northwest Power and Conservation Council notes in its latest planning document that "the region needs to devote significant effort to expanding the supply of cost-effective renewable resources, many of

[1] Environment Oregon Research & Policy Center, *Solar Works for Oregon*, Summer 2012. Available online: http://www.environmentoregon.org/sites/environment/files/reports/Solar%20Works%20for%20Oregon_Summer%202012.pdf

which may be small scale and local in nature." [2] Launching a strong market for solar power is one way to meet that need. Solar PV provides value to all electricity consumers and to society as a whole in important ways. For example:

- Local solar PV generates electricity close to where it will be used, reducing the need to invest in building and maintaining new power lines and other infrastructure, increasing the reliability of electricity service, and reducing electricity losses that would occur if the power were transmitted over a long distance.
- Because solar panels require no fuel, they are a very low-risk investment. Solar PV can act as an effective hedge against the possibility of short-term spikes or long-term increases in electricity prices.
- Solar also benefits society at large by reducing global warming pollution. Building 250,000 solar rooftops in Oregon by 2025 would prevent 3.8 million tons of carbon dioxide pollution.

Many of these benefits are not captured in the way utility companies have traditionally priced power. Policy reforms are required to ensure that the market appropriately recognizes the value that solar energy provides and compensates individuals and businesses who install solar panels.

Rooftop solar can create jobs and strengthen Oregon's economy

Oregon is already one of the nation's leading centers for solar technology design and manufacturing. Oregon's solar industry today employs 3,300 workers at 545 firms—and its solar job market is growing faster than in all but five other states. Increasing local demand for solar power can create thousands of additional jobs in the clean energy industry. **Expanding Oregon's solar energy market would create thousands of additional jobs in system manufacturing, and particularly in installation and maintenance—jobs that cannot be outsourced.**

While we have one of the fastest growing solar industries in the country, Oregon's solar industry is now tied to growing markets in other states and around the world. For example, in April 2011, Portland-based Solar Nation completed the installation of what was at the time the nation's largest rooftop energy system, using solar panels made by SolarWorld in Hillsboro. But the system was located on top of a building in Edison, New Jersey. While installations in other states benefit Oregon manufacturers, a steady market in Oregon would be even more beneficial for the local solar industry

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Solar energy can open the door for every citizen to play an important role in building a clean energy future for Oregon. The state has a significant opportunity to create jobs, reduce pollution, and decrease the risk posed by global warming for future generations. Environment Oregon is committed to working with this committee and stakeholders to improve upon HB 2839.

[2] Northwest Power and Conservation Council, Sixth Northwest Conservation and Electric Power Plan, February 2010.