

February 22, 2019

RE: House Bill 2618

Dear House Energy and Environment Committee:

It is difficult to quantify the damage caused to Oregon solar companies when the Residential Energy Tax Credit program expired. 2018 was a constant struggle for the residential solar industry in Oregon, and in my 9 years of experience it was the worst year I have seen. With over a 20% decrease in projects, an even steeper drop in overall revenue, and decreased working hours for employees across the board it is a history we hope not to repeat in the coming years. In fact, it calls into question whether or not residential solar can survive in Oregon without some immediate changes.

It is a puzzling situation for homeowners and those of us working for solar installation companies - the state would be hard-pressed to find a better economic program for the associated costs and all of the ancillary side benefits.

Good, local jobs? Absolutely. Our employees average over \$40/hour. Unfortunately, our small business has one less employee now thanks to the decrease in residential solar projects in 2018.

Clean and renewable energy? Yes, and yes. No pollution, no noise, and free fuel – what more could we ask for? If we are truly going to make our clean energy goals become reality, strong support for solar projects of all sizes is needed, and it is needed now.

Strong investment? It could be. Homeowners recognize the need to transition to new energy sources, and they want to invest their money in solar, but with breakeven periods averaging over 10 years for residential systems there is a modest financial incentive gap that needs to be filled. In my experience, a breakeven point of 6 to 7 years is a tipping point where homeowners decide to put their money into a solar project rather than saving it or spending it on other home improvement projects.

Does solar in Oregon support a stronger, more flexible utility grid? Again, it could. Highly distributed energy production (rooftop residential solar) could play a huge part in our state's resiliency to natural disasters and human caused crises. But we have to invest in solar, storage, and other solutions that strengthen our grid to make this happen.

I (and many other people employed in solar) hope to continue working in the industry for the long-term. I would love to enjoy a stable job and the satisfaction that working in the clean energy industry brings with it, but key legislation like House Bill 2618 is needed to keep our solar workforce strong, employed and ready to assist as we move towards our clean energy future in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cheston W. Zimmer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Cheston W. Zimmer