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House Energy and Environment Committee  
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Re: Baker County Supports Community Renewable Energy HB 2857

Chair Helm and Committee Members,

We are writing today in support of House Bill 2857. HB 2857 promotes new small-scale renewable energy projects in Oregon and protects existing projects, both of which are vital for supporting rural economic development and our state's ambitious climate goals. HB 2857 does this by clarifying and improving Oregon's implementation of the Public Utility Regulatory Practices Act ("PURPA").

Baker County has been working to develop hydroelectric power on existing water infrastructure in the county, specifically on the Bureau of Reclamation's Mason Dam near Baker City. This 2.2 MW facility would generate approximately 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 kWh of clean electricity annually for Eastern Oregon. Further, because this generation would coincide with the irrigation season when energy demand for pumping is high, this low-impact project would serve as a perfect balance to the grid. Fully utilizing this existing infrastructure for clean energy production would create jobs and add revenue to the county's coffers to further support our community.

HB 2857 could revive Oregon's small-scale community renewable energy (production and development). Among other things, HB 2857 aids in ensuring fair energy prices are paid from utilities that reflect the transmission savings because of local generation, ensures that we're paid fairly for the increased capacity value added to the grid, updates the amount of non-utility owned low-impact hydro that can qualify for the Oregon Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS), strengthens the mission of the Oregon PUC in supporting small-scale renewable energy development, makes important transparency changes, and updates aspects of the community renewable standard.

The benefits of small-scale community renewable energy are HUGE in rural areas like Baker County. This bill ensures that PURPA can continue to be a win-win for rural economic development and Oregon's green future. We appreciate your service and attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,

Jason Yencopal, Director  
Baker County Emergency Management  
Mason Dam Hydroelectric Project Lead