



Senate Committee on Business and Labor
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

February 3, 2020

Dear Chair Taylor and members of the committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 1563 today. I'm Eric Hansen, owner of True South Solar in Ashland. We install residential and commercial solar in Southern Oregon. I started the business with a friend in 2010 out of our home offices and a storage unit warehouse. In nine years we've grown to twenty employees, and now own our own solar powered office, and have hundreds of happy customers. Our mission is "Solar on every roof, and best jobs ever!"

I'm also the board treasurer of the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association (OSEIA). OSEIA is a trade association founded in 1981 to promote clean, renewable, solar technologies. OSEIA members include businesses, non-profit groups, and other solar industry stakeholders. We provide a unified voice of the solar and storage industry and focus exclusively on the solar value chain; from workforce development to permitting, advocacy, policy, and regulation for manufacturing, residential, commercial, community, and utility scale solar and storage projects on the local, state and regional level.

OSEIA urges your support of SB 1563. SB 1563 is the product of over a year of conversations between OSEIA and IBEW that makes minor updates to the Limited Renewable Technician (LRT) license. In the past several months OSEIA has worked with the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) to ensure the technical language works for them as well. The -1 amendment before you represents compromise language that OSEIA, IBEW and NECA have all agreed to. We want to thank IBEW and NECA for their support of this bill and we urge this committee to adopt the amendment and the bill.

The LRT license was created two decades ago after recognition by the Oregon Legislature that a new license was needed to help the growing renewables industry. A lot has changed in twenty years. The original license had a cap of 25 kW on the project size that LRTs could install. Twenty years ago, a 25kW system was considered a large system but that's not the case in 2020. Improving technology and decreasing costs mean that residential and commercial customers now regularly have projects larger than 25 kW. This bill takes a good first step toward updating the project size LRTs can install by increasing the cap to 50 kW.



The license currently restricts LRTs to working on direct current (DC) only. However, technology improvements now have alternating current (AC) as part of microinverters that are attached to each panel. These microinverters are “plug and play” that come with factory-provided interconnecting cables that installers can use to connect the panels together on the roof. OSEIA, IBEW and NECA have agreed on language in the -1 amendment that allows LRTs to install microinverters, but retains the requirement that a journeyman electrician connect the solar system to the grid.

OSEIA is committing to continuing conversations with IBEW and NECA to further update the license and we hope to bring something back to this committee in the future. In the present, this bill provides immediate benefit to small solar companies across the state.

SB 1563 makes a critical upgrade to the LRT license. For small business owners like myself, this bill makes common sense updates that allow a more streamlined process for completing a solar project. This bill also improves that value of the LRT license for my employees.

Thank you for your time and I’m happy to answer questions.

Sincerely,

Eric Hansen
Owner, True South Solar
Board Treasurer, OSEIA