

Dear Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Helm, and members of the Committee:

My name is Selena McCone and I live in Eugene, Oregon. I am a student at the University of Oregon pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Anthropology and a Minor in Native American Studies. I am a member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe in South Dakota and I learn more about my culture and the challenges Native Americans face every day. I started volunteering for the Energy Justice Leadership Institute during the Coronavirus Pandemic with the goal to raise awareness about the current health of our planet and to help catapult the transition to all green energy. Today, as I write to you, I hope to leave you with the impression that an integral part of energy justice is not only accessibility, but affordability.

I have distinct memories in high school when my single mother was struggling to keep up with bills during the 2008 stock market crash. She worked herself to the bone trying to catch up on our energy bills, but the late fees piling up made it that much harder. We had our energy shut on and off repeatedly in the middle of winter. We layered up with clothing, hats, and gloves. We used flashlights to see in the dark and were lucky enough to have a fireplace so we could heat canned food for meals. My mother was forced to go to churches and beg for help to get the electric turned back on. I'll never forget the shame she and I felt or the fact that it cost so much to have energy in the first place. I also remember the anger and resentment I had towards the energy company for making it such a challenge to go about our daily lives.

I support HB 2475 because I believe that access to an energy source is a human right and not a privilege. Today, we know that the Coronavirus pandemic is keeping more people at home, which in turn creates an even higher energy bill. Families are struggling to pay their energy bill now more than ever. It is still a mind-boggling concept to realize that the top 1% is being charged the same rate for energy as everyone else. I believe that it is high time we create a design that will also benefit the lower and middle class in order to reduce or alleviate the energy burden.

To this day, if I ever run the dishwasher, I turn it off as soon as it hits the dry cycle so that I can keep the energy bill low. To this day, I turn lights off if I leave a room. To this day, I turn off the heat at bedtime. My life still revolves around an energy bill and having enough money to pay it. I believe that it should not be such a struggle to have an energy source. I encourage you to think long and hard about the ways HB 2475 could make a difference in many lives. I hope that you were able to take a glimpse into the challenges it creates for me as well as many others.

Thank you Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith, Vice-Chair Helm, and members of the Committee for supporting Energy Affordability HB 2475.

Sincerely,

Selena McCone