



To: Members of the House Committee on Energy and Environment
From: Ira Cuello-Martinez, PCUN
Re: Support for HB 2475

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

PCUN is a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of farmworkers and working Latinx families across the state of Oregon. We are located in the vibrant and rural Woodburn, OR. PCUN fully supports House Bill 2475 also known as the Oregon Energy Affordability Act.

As we know, many of our community members have been impacted by the pandemic and the resulting economic crisis that we currently face. Many folks reached out to our organization in search of financial support with the two most frequent reasons being rent and utility costs. These monthly expenses have a significant impact on our farmworker and Latinx families across the state. Energy rates in particular are difficult to navigate in low-income households given the rate fluctuations throughout the year. We must maintain our homes warm throughout the winter and cool during the summer. However, that is not always an option for everyone. According to the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS)— a report published by the U.S. Department of Labor— the average total income of farm workers is between \$20,000 to \$24,999 for a family. Twenty-five percent of all farm workers had a family income below the federal poverty line.

Many of our farmworkers grapple with the changing climate on the fields and return home to face similar challenges. The high energy costs limit heating and cooling usage, or they are used at the expense of other essentials like food and medicine. Families with children must also take into account the higher energy use as a result of virtual learning. Schools remain closed and the energy burden is further placed on low-income households.

This bill will help families across the state be able to afford energy costs with lower rates for those who need it the most. Additionally, it will create more opportunity for organizations that represent the most impacted communities to participate in regulatory processes.

We urge you to vote in favor of House Bill 2475.

Sincerely,

Ira Cuello-Martinez
Climate Policy Associate
PCUN