



Co-Chairs Taylor and Reardon
Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Natural Resources
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem Oregon 97301

March 3, 2021

RE: SB 5515 – SUPPORT

Dear Co-chairs Taylor and Reardon, and members of the committee,

Oregon Environmental Council (OEC) is a statewide nonprofit that advances innovative, collaborative and equitable solutions to Oregon’s environmental challenges for today and future generations. Climate Solutions is a regional non-profit working to accelerate clean energy solutions to the climate crisis. **On behalf of our thousands of members statewide, we urge you to support SB 5515, a bill that would provide biennial funding for the Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE).**

From the 2020 wildfires to last month’s winter storms, the extreme weather events of the past year and the resulting power outages across the state have made clearer than ever the need to maintain a resilient and affordable energy system. It is therefore essential that the legislature adequately fund the Oregon Department of Energy, an agency with a mission to do just that.

Our organizations believe that Oregon is stronger and better positioned to navigate the innovations and changes in energy sectors if our state energy department is well-resourced and able to provide decision-makers with technical and policy expertise. Along with many others across the state, OEC and Climate Solutions look to ODOE to provide technical expertise, data, and thought leadership on energy policy. The 2020 Oregon Biennial Energy Report is a recent example, and we look forward to future reports on the changing energy landscape, including the electrification of transportation. In addition, ODOE plays an important role in ensuring energy safety, including oversight of legacy nuclear energy issues, and in the siting of new energy facilities. An effective ODOE requires adequate resources to support these functions.

ODOE works on behalf of Oregonians to lead our state to a safe, clean, and sustainable energy future. Yet, despite the critical role that ODOE plays in responsibly balancing energy needs and impacts and protecting Oregon’s environment and public health, the agency has faced deep and broad budget cuts the past three biennia. At the same time, the agency has faced increased costs and pressure on underlying funding streams, including the Energy Supplier Assessment (ESA), which makes up nearly 50% of ODOE’s operating budget. At a time when Oregon’s energy needs and future are front of mind for Oregonians, it is critical that the legislature support full funding for ODOE.

Further, as Oregon's chief agency responsible for matters related to energy production, conservation and related safety and environmental impacts, ODOE has a critical role to play in helping the state achieve its climate goals. ODOE has retooled its limited remaining incentive programs to provide strong transparency, oversight and accountability the past few years, while also successfully and cost-effectively delivering the incentive benefits to Oregonians. In addition to its own work (e.g., advancing more energy efficient appliance standards), ODOE plays an important role in supporting other agencies' emission reduction activities too. As a powerhouse of information, data and policy analytics, ODOE can help inform and ensure the strongest possible climate policy outcomes. With this in mind, **our organizations especially support full funding for ODOE's Energy Policy Innovation Division**, which is responsible for efficiency standards, policy analysis and staff support for the Oregon Global Warming Commission.

Finally, we also urge your support on the Policy Option Package to fund the **Solar + Storage Rebate Program (POP #206)**. This successful program provides rebates for residential customers and low-income service providers in Oregon to install solar electric systems and paired solar and storage systems. In doing so, it provides jobs, saves Oregonians money on their electricity bills, improves resiliency and reduces climate pollution.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to support SB 5515.

Sincerely,



Nora Apter
Climate Program Director
Oregon Environmental Council



Meredith Connolly
Oregon Director
Climate Solutions