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1 February 2021

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

My name is Alessandra de la Torre, I am the Energy Justice Organizer at Rogue Climate, an environmental justice organization with offices in Phoenix and Coos Bay, Oregon. Our work includes collaborating with local governments to pass clean energy plans, developing energy efficiency programs that help people in Southern Oregon and the South Coast save money on energy bills and create jobs, running a fire relief center for our neighbors displaced by the Almeda Fire, and much more.

Rogue Climate urges this committee to support the passage of HB 2475 as a step forward to support Oregonians who are struggling to stay afloat with the current ongoing financial, health, wildfire, and racial injustice crises our communities are experiencing.

In the last year, we have worked with families, many latinx and spanish-speaking, to help find resources for utility bill support. Many of these families have been impacted by the fire or have lost their jobs and work hours due to Covid19, and each month utility bills they cannot afford, add up. This can lead to a slippery slope. One in five customers shut-off from utility service face homelessness<sup>1</sup>. The economic and wildfire crises our communities are facing have led to more and more people experiencing energy burden.

While supporting these families, I learned that there are very few services that assist people with their utility bills. Some only offered support one time only. Some run by service organizations that were overwhelmed by the vast need for support, could not call back for months, or had very long application processes that were not offered in other languages.

We also see a pattern in rural Oregon of high energy burden. In the Biennial Energy Report, there is a map that lays out the state counties with the percentage of households who are

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<https://www.statesmanjournal.com/story/opinion/2020/07/31/extend-statewide-moratorium-utility-disconnections-pandemic/5547502002/>



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energy burdened. For the communities we serve in Coos County, we see 40%-50% of households are energy burdened.<sup>2</sup>

I learned that policies like, the Energy Affordability act or HB 2475, are so needed in rural Oregon and across the state. By passing HB 2475, we can help people make sure they're only paying their fair share for their energy bills and give people stability so that they can cope with crises and contribute to their communities. Passing this bill will change lives for the better.

Members of the committee, we urge you to support the Energy Affordability Bill, HB 2475, today.

Sincerely,  
Alessandra de la Torre, Energy Justice Organizer  
Rogue Climate