



Portland General Electric

121 SW Salmon Street • Portland, OR 97204
portlandgeneral.com

House Education Committee
Oregon Legislature
900 Court St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Alonso Leon, Vice Chair Neron, Vice Chair Weber, and members of the committee:

For the record my name is Anne Mersereau, and I am the Vice President of HR, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion for Portland General Electric and the Vice Chair of the Oregon Workforce Talent and Development Board. I write in support of HB 2092 which will continue to provide meaningful work experience and workforce training as a powerful career pathway to family-wage jobs.

At PGE, we have a long-standing commitment to work-based learning experiences for youth and young adults through internship programs like Empowering Leaders Institute, Multiple Engineering Cooperative Program, and our newest program, PGE Project Zero. We know as our economy transitions away from fossil fuels, green job opportunities will multiply, and we want to ensure we are bringing everyone along in that transition.

Project Zero, launched in 2020, is providing young adults age 20 to 24, who aren't currently working or in school, needed career pathways through this innovative internship program. The program was developed in partnership with environmental and youth development community-based organizations, including Oregon Youth Corp.

One of our Project Zero interns, who is receiving his certificate of completion, today, shared that he started working in the restaurant industry after high school, had a passion for the environment and didn't know how to transition from one to the other without a college degree.

Project Zero's six-month internship program gave him the opportunity he needed to explore the green sector. This work-based learning opportunity led to his accepting a full-time position, which starts this month, at Columbia Land Trust, one of our Project Zero Destination Employers.

Another intern has chosen to pursue completion of a college degree. He's in the running for a competitive summer internship opportunity with the National Science Foundation because of the mentorship of his Project Zero supervisor from Columbia Slough Watershed Council.

Two other interns are pursuing potential full-time entry level positions at PGE in Information Technology and with PGE Parks.

Why is PGE focused on Project Zero, in particular?

- 47% of 16-24-year olds in Oregon are living below 200% of Federal Poverty level
- In the Portland-Vancouver region, almost 30,000 teens and young adults are not working and are not in school - that is 11% of all young people in the region.
- Some of these young people face significant challenges: extreme poverty, homelessness, or the criminalization of poverty and often need intensive assistance to get and stay employed.
- Young adults participating in the Project Zero internship program receive individualized support to help them remove barriers that have stood in the way of their success, such as access to transportation, education, shelter, mental wellness, and childcare.

At PGE, we believe that youth and young adult employment opportunities provide meaningful work experience and workforce training and serve as a powerful tool to transform our business and our culture.

Oregon's future workforce will be better served by the opportunities and experiences the Oregon Youth Employment Program offers. This is why we ask you to support passing HB 2092 to:

- Support serving youth who are women, from BIPOC communities, tribal citizens, and/or navigating poverty
- Support disaggregated data that informs the work and helps remove systemic barriers
- Support exposure to in-demand jobs, like those in the green sector
- Support paid work-based learning experiences

The proposed changes to the Oregon Youth Employment Program are important steps to ensuring youth from diverse backgrounds throughout the state can see the world of possibility ahead of them.

Thank you for your consideration of these written comments.

Regards,



Anne Mersereau

VP Human Resources, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Portland General Electric
Vice-Chair Oregon Workforce Talent Development Board