



February 2, 2021

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

My name is Akashdeep Singh and I am the Policy and Advocacy Manager at OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon. It is my honor and pleasure to write in support of HB 2475, a bill that would provide significant relief to struggling Oregon families and community organizations a unique opportunity to increase community engagement in utility processes.

Families who were already struggling to make ends meet before the pandemic find it even more difficult to do so. Families are taking drastic measures such as finding alternate sources of heating during the winter and or keeping their homes at lower heating temperatures. These cost-saving measures can have a potentially devastating health consequences for respiratory health. The risk of such consequences is only augmented during a respiratory pandemic. HB 2475 is an opportunity to alleviate some of those burdens.

HB 2475 gives the PUC much-needed authority to allow utilities to provide rate designs like discounts, alleviating the energy burden for the communities we work with and represent. As community members have to spend more time indoors, their energy burdens are increasing and they have less income for other needs and to support local community businesses.

There has always been a disconnect between community members and decision making processes, but HB 2475 offers a unique opportunity for community organizations who represent low-income Oregonians and Oregonians of color. Community organizations are often asked to do the extra work of making sure our community members are represented in decision-making processes but rarely are we provided with the resources to do so.

HB 2475 is an opportunity to include community voices and provide us with the necessary resources to transform our clean energy future without replicating the injustices of the systems we are working to leave behind. We urge you to vote yes on this critical piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

Akashdeep Singh

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