



Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

610 SW Broadway, Suite 400
Portland, OR 97205

(503) 227-1984
www.oregoncub.org

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**Testimony of Samuel Pastrick
Regarding HB 2739 - Energy Energy Assistance Program
Before the House Committee on Human Services**

Chair Williams, Vice Chairs Leif and Ruiz, members of the Committee:

My name is Samuel Pastrick. I'm the Advocacy Manager at Oregon Citizens' Utility Board (CUB). CUB is a membership-based 501(c)3 nonprofit consumer advocacy organization that represents and advocates for the broad interests of residential energy and telecommunications utility customers. I am pleased to submit this testimony in support of HB 2739 -1 because the bill will **help customers with low-incomes afford their electric utility service.**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately harmed Oregon's lowest income and historically marginalized communities. In response, the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) opened an investigation early in the pandemic to identify and respond to customer impacts. Utilities, customer groups like CUB, advocates for low-income communities, and other stakeholders, convened to negotiate a policy package that eventually became [Commission Order No. 20-324](#). An essential provision of this landmark agreement was to approach the Legislature to increase the Oregon Energy Assistance Program (OEAP) by \$10m per year.

OEAP is a long standing and effective anti-poverty program for income eligible customers of Oregon's two largest electric utilities, Portland General Electric and Pacific Power. Customers of these utilities fund OEAP through a small meter charge on their bills. Oregon Housing and Community Services allocate these funds to Community Action Agencies, which then deliver support to qualified customers.

The PUC's "customer impact" Order further established a moratorium on energy disconnections for residential customers. The moratorium is scheduled to end on June 15. Hundreds of already vulnerable customers will face unimaginable past due balances. Beyond monies allocated by the utilities (also per the PUC Order), as well as forthcoming federal support, our neighbors most in need deserve additional bill payment resources. HB 2739 -1 will ensure this critical support.

Samuel Pastrick
samuel@oregoncub.org